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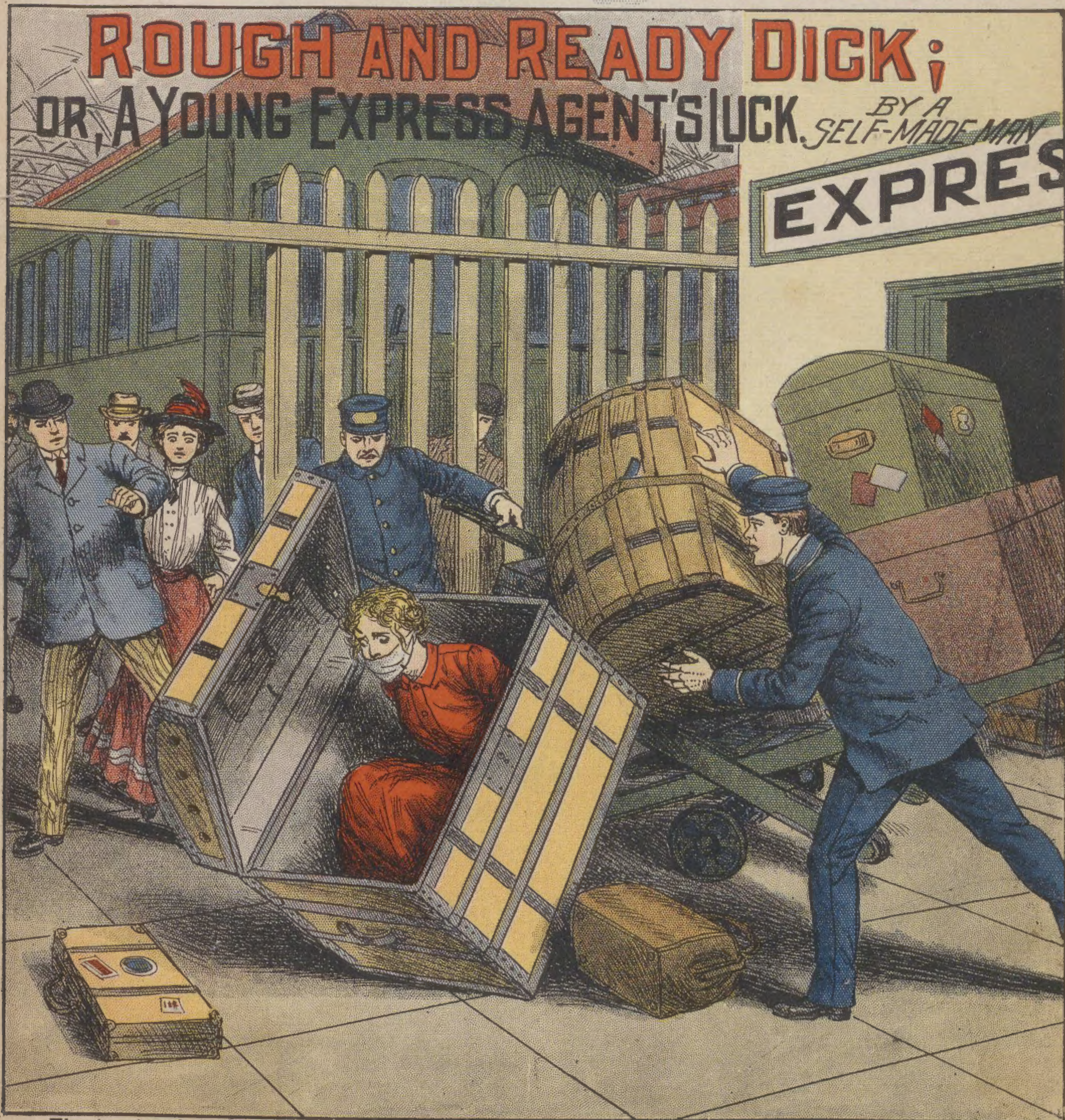
AND

FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

ROUGH AND READY DICK;
OR, A YOUNG EXPRESS AGENT'S LUCK. *BY A SELF-MADE MAN*

EXPRES



The top trunk fell with a crash, the cover burst open, and a lovely young girl was revealed bound and gagged, inside. "Great Scott! What's this?" cried Dick, aghast at the discovery, while the spectators looked on in amazement.

1914

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STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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ROUGH AND READY DICK

OR,

A YOUNG EXPRESS AGENT'S LUCK

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

DICK ENACTS THE ROLE OF A KNIGHT ERRANT.

"Hold on there, you chaps! What are you doing?" cried Dick Osborn excitedly.

Dick was driver of an express wagon, and was delivering packages and small boxes along his route in the upper Bronx Borough late one afternoon when two-hard-featured men who had been lounging near the door of a corner saloon, close to where Dick had stopped to leave a small box, grabbed a package marked "Value, \$100," and ran off down the side street with it.

The young expressman was amazed at their nerve, but he was equal to the emergency.

Instead of running after the men, he threw the box he had in his hands back into the wagon, sprang up on the seat, turned the vehicle and, whipping up the horse, which was a fast one, dashed after them.

This prompt action on his part was more than the two rascals had bargained for.

They had calculated he would adopt a different course, and being good runners, felt sure of escaping.

The block was a long one, and the furious clatter of the horse and express wagon down the street attracted some notice, particularly as the boy kept yelling at the fleeing men to stop.

There was no way for them to turn out without entering private grounds, and this they did not want to do if they could avoid it.

As long as they kept to the sidewalk there could only be

one issue to the chase, as Dick overhauled them hand over hand.

Finally the fellow who had the package dashed through a gate while the other kept on down the street.

Dick knew which had the package, and reining in his horse opposite the gate, sprang from his seat and vaulting the fence like an acrobat, closed rapidly on the thief.

Seeing that he could not escape, he turned and made a motion to throw the package in Dick's face.

The movement was fatal to him.

He tripped and measured his length on the ground, the package flying several feet away.

Dick recovered the property, and then jumped on the fellow before he was able to escape.

"What do you mean by stealing that package?" he demanded, fixing the rascal's countenance in his eye, so that he would know him if he ever met him again.

"None of yer business!" snarled the fellow sulkily.

"It is my business. I'm responsible for everything that is on the wagon. If there was a cop in sight I'd give you in charge," returned Dick.

"You'd regret it if yer did," replied the thief, with a scowl.

"No, I wouldn't. You can't intimidate me with your black looks. I'm not afraid of you, or several more like you," said the boy, sturdily.

"Are yer goin' to let me go? I'd advise yer to."

"I'll have to, because there's not a policeman about, but it would give me a whole lot of satisfaction to land you and your companion behind the bars. It would teach you a lesson you need badly."

"We'll get square with you for this," said the man, backing away.

"All right," replied Dick, coolly. "Get square with me if you can. You won't catch me napping. If you monkey with me again, you may not get off so easily."

"You don't know us."

"I don't want to know you. If you keep on as you're going it won't be long before you both see your finish."

"You'll see your finish first. We never forget a debt."

"Go on now, chase yourself, and thank your stars that you're lucky for once in your life," replied Dick, retracing his steps to the street with the package, chuckling to himself at the discomfiture of the two rascals.

Dick Osborn was an orphan who was making his way ahead in the world by his own efforts, and he found the road pretty rocky.

He lived with his employer, who had his office on Third Avenue near 161st Street, and dwelt in a small flat over his place of business.

Dick's boss was one of the rough and ready class, who had little refinement about him, but as Dick was rough and ready himself, he didn't mind his employer's uncouth ways.

The boy's father and mother had been very ordinary people.

Dick, however, didn't take after either.

He was more like his grandfather, who had been a hustler in his time, and made his way up in the world from nothing.

When the old gentleman died it was found that he had never forgiven his son, Dick's father, for marrying a maid in the Osborn household, and to show his resentment, he left his son only a thousand dollars, while the balance of his property went to public charity.

So Dick's father left his mother scarcely anything, and when she died the boy was thrown on his own resources.

At that time Mr. O'Grady, the expressman, was looking for an assistant, and he offered the place to Dick, for he was a strong, healthy boy.

After his triumph over the two thieves, Dick returned to the avenue and delivered the box he had in his arms at the time the rascals tried to get away with the valuable package.

Then he went on, and in the course of an hour finished up his route.

He returned to the office and found an order awaiting him to remove a trunk from a certain house nearby to a tenement in a thickly settled part of the Bronx.

He drove around for the trunk, and when he jumped down from his seat he saw something in the gutter that looked like a pocketbook.

"That's the way some people chuck their old wallets away, to make people who see them lying around loose think they've found a prize," muttered Dick, looking at the dirty object rather dubiously, for more than once he had been fooled on such things.

He was going to leave it where it lay, but after walking a few paces away, he returned and picked it up.

Opening it, expecting to be fooled as usual, he was surprised to find four \$5 bills in it, some loose change, two postage stamps, and a number of humorous clippings, but not the slightest clue to the owner's identity.

"Gee! This is a find for fair, and I was going to pass

it over," he said. "I'm certainly in luck, for the wallet looks as if it has been kicking around some time, and there's little likelihood that the owner will ever show up. The money will come in very handy for me, as I don't get a whole lot from Mr. O'Grady."

Dick dropped the wallet into his pocket and went into the house after the trunk, which he brought down three flights on his back.

It was a poor and rather squalid neighborhood that he carried the trunk to in the dusk of the evening.

The slums of the Bronx the vicinity was called.

The buildings were not so old, but they were cheaply constructed tenements inhabited by the poorer element of that section of Greater New York.

When Dick drove into the block he found it filled with dirty, poorly-dressed children of all ages from the crawling tot up to fifteen or so.

They were playing rough games and screaming at the top of their voices.

Men of all nationalities were lounging around the street entrances to the buildings, or about the doorways of the cheap-looking stores that occupied the ground floor of the tenements.

Dick after some difficulty found the house he was looking for, and the man, a swarthy Sicilian, to whom the trunk belonged, was standing at the entrance on the lookout for it.

It was a foreign-made trunk covered with some kind of animal skin, and as it was not very heavy, Dick was not called on to exert great strength in taking it up to the top floor for the owner.

"Vera good," said the Sicilian, when the boy placed it in a corner of a dirty room and turned to go, "me treata you to a nice drink."

"No, you won't. I don't drink," replied Dick.

"What! You no drink!" exclaimed the man, raising his hands in astonishment.

"No," returned the boy, shortly.

"You smoke cigar, eh?"

"No, I don't smoke, either."

The Sicilian shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say that he thought Dick an odd boy, and then offered him a nickel.

Dick took the tip and the man followed him downstairs to the street.

As the young expressman was about to mount into a seat, a shrill girlish scream rang out from the dark entrance of one of the tenements across the way.

It was a scream denoting acute pain and distress, and it immediately attracted Dick's notice.

It was apparently such a common occurrence in that neighborhood that nobody else paid any attention to it.

The next instant a young and extremely pretty girl of perhaps fourteen years, came darting into the street, pursued by a stout virago of a woman, with a fiery face, blazing with passion.

She caught the girl by her long, beautiful brown hair, and lashed her savagely about the back and shoulders with a heavy black strap.

Dick was not used to such an exhibition of cruelty, and besides, his chivalrous nature always induced him to take the part of the weak against the strong.

As he started over to remonstrate with the hag, the girl broke away from the woman and, seeming to believe that the young expressman, who was a stranger to the neighborhood, was the only one she could appeal to with any hope of success, rushed up to him, crying:

"Save me! Save me! She is murdering me. Please, please save me!"

Dick couldn't turn down an appeal of that kind even if he had to face a mob in behalf of the person who asked his assistance, so he threw one arm protectingly around the girl and, stepping between her and her persecutor, said in resolute tones:

"Cut it out. I won't stand by and see a strong woman like you beating a poor little defenseless girl. Sheer off with that strap."

The hag stopped short and stared at him aghast at his audacity in butting into her affairs, while the people around, scenting a new kind of excitement, for they all knew the prowess and sand of Mother Dorkins, quickly formed a circle at a respectful distance around the principals in the affair.

CHAPTER II.

DICK TAKES NELLIE HATTON UNDER HIS WING.

The vixen gave a snarling cry like that of a roused tigress, and tried to grasp the girl by the hair once more.

Dick pulled the trembling girl out of her reach.

"None of that," he said. "You want to leave this girl alone."

"How dare you interfere?" roared the woman, boiling over with rage and glaring ferociously at the plucky young expressman. "This is my darter, and I won't have nobody come between me and her."

"Your daughter!" replied Dick. "She is, like fun. You're an old hag, while she——"

"I'm an old hag, am I?" screamed the virago. "I'll tear your eyes out."

She threw out her claw-like fingers at Dick's face, but the boy dodged them.

Then she swung the strap and brought it down on the young expressman's shoulders with all the force she could muster.

Old as she was she could hit hard, and the weight of the blow made Dick realize what the girl was up against.

He grabbed the strap and tore it away from the old woman.

"Oh, you villain!" she raved, quite mad with passion. "I'll be the death of you for that!"

She flew right at him tooth and nail, and he had to release the girl in order to defend himself.

He felt that he was at considerable disadvantage, for he didn't like to strike a woman, no matter how tough she was.

"Jump into the wagon or she may lay hold of you," said Dick to the girl.

She obeyed him and nobody tried to stop her but the virago, and she couldn't get at her because Dick gave her a push that sent her staggering away.

She came up to the scratch with remarkable agility for one of her years, so that Dick had his hands full trying to stand her off.

The crowd applauded the boy's valiant stand against Mother Dorkins, who was disliked and feared by all the women in the neighborhood, while hardly a man who knew her would have courted a personal encounter with the old harriidan.

The noise of the fray had by this time aroused the entire block.

Men, women and children hung out of the windows, or came rushing out to join the crowd encircled around Dick and the hag.

Dick saw that matters had assumed a very serious aspect. The old woman was a scrapper from Scrappersville, and only his dexterity saved him from serious consequences.

He decided to bring matters to an end and be off before a policeman appeared, arrested them both for disorderly conduct, and took them to the nearest station.

The opportunity came even as he figured on it.

Screeching with baffled rage, she tore at him for the dozenth time, determined to tear him to pieces if she got her claws on him.

Quick as a flash he dropped in front of her.

She tripped over him and shot forward, falling on the stones.

There she lay half stunned for several moments.

Dick saw his chance and was quick to avail himself of it.

He pushed his way through the crowd, which was all in his favor, jumped up on the wagon seat, seized the reins and drove off up the street at a quick rate.

When he reached the corner he slowed down, remembering that the girl was in the wagon.

"I suppose you want to get out," he said, reining in and turning to his fair and unfortunate passenger.

"I don't know," she answered, tearfully. "Mother Dorkins will half kill me when I go back."

"Then why go back? Is she a relative of yours?"

"No, no," replied the girl, with a shudder.

"Does she beat you often?"

"All the time."

"Why don't you leave her?"

"I'm afraid."

"How long have you been living with her?"

"Three years."

"How came you to get into her clutches?"

"When my mother died three years ago downtown I was put out on the street by the agent of the house where we lived. Mother Dorkins lived in a house nearby, and she took me in until I could find a place to go. That is what she told me, but after I was in the house she wouldn't let me leave her. When she moved up here she brought me with her, and ever since she's been getting worse and worse. She drinks and swears awful now. She has several times threatened to follow and kill me if I dare run away, but I'd just as soon be dead as to stay with her any longer. She nearly killed me to-night, and she'll finish me when I get back, if I go, because you got the best of her."

"Don't go back. I know a very nice woman living on Eagle Avenue in a two-family house who is looking for a young girl to do light housekeeping. I'll take you to see her. She'll give you a good home and wages to dress yourself with and have something over. I'll guarantee you'll like her. What do you say?"

"I'll go; but if Mother Dorkins finds out where I've gone she'll murder me, I'm afraid."

"The chances are against her ever finding you. I'll come around every little while and see how you are getting on in your new home. If Mother Dorkins should discover you and try to do you any harm, just tell me and I'll be down on her like a cartload of bricks."

"I wouldn't want you to get into any more trouble on my account. You were very good to save me from her to-night, and it is very kind of you to offer to get me a home," said the girl, looking at him gratefully.

"That's all right, miss. I've taken an interest in you. I'm an orphan myself, and know what it is to be thrown on the world which hasn't much feeling for those who are down on their luck. I'll be a brother to you as long as you need my help."

"Thank you, oh, thank you."

"Now tell me your name."

"Nellie Hatton."

"My name is Dick Osborn. I am living with my boss, Terrance O'Grady, who owns this express business. He's rather a rough customer, but I don't mind him a bit. Come now, get up on the seat, and we'll go on."

Nellie took her place beside the young expressman, and he started for the home of Mrs. Lawrence on Eagle Avenue.

Dick gave the girl a very favorable account of Mrs. Lawrence, so that Nellie felt sure she should like her.

It did not take long to reach her house, and Dick took the girl inside and introduced her to the motherly-looking lady who was in want of a girl of her age.

"Nellie will tell you her story, and I am sure you will do the right thing by her, Mrs. Lawrence," said Dick. "I will be around in a day or two to see her, as I am much interested in her future prospects, though I haven't known her an hour. She will tell you what I did in her behalf this evening and how I helped to get her away from the old crone who was making life miserable for her."

Dick then said good-by to Nellie Hatton and took his departure.

CHAPTER III.

CONSPIRING AGAINST DICK AND NELLIE.

On the following afternoon when Dick drove up to the express office a tough-looking boy, who had been lounging near the door for an hour, slouched up to him as he sprang down from his seat and said:

"You're the feller dat had a scrap wit' Mother Dorkins last night over on ——— Street, ain't yer?"

"Yes; what about it?"

"You carried dat gal of hers off in your waggin. Where did yer shake her?"

"What business is that of yours?" demanded Dick.

"I want to know where yer took her to," replied the young tough, doggedly.

"I suppose Mother Dorkins sent you to find out?"

"What do you care who sent me?"

"I'm not giving Mother Dorkins any information about that girl."

"Oh, yer ain't," said the youth, aggressively.

"You heard what I said."

"I heard yer. If yer don't tell me, Mother Dorkins will be over lookin' for yer herself."

"It won't do her any good."

"She'll make you sick before she's t'rough wit' youse."

"I thought she had enough of me last night."

"Naw. She wants dat gal back, and she's goin' to get her, so if yer ain't lookin' for trouble yer'd better tell me where yer set her down."

"I'll tell you nothing. Skin," and Dick brushed by him and entered the express office.

The tough boy walked off dissatisfied with the unfruitful result of his mission.

Dick wasn't worrying about a visit from Mother Dorkins.

If she came over to see him about Nellie Hatton, he intended to send her away with a flea in her ear.

He regarded himself as the girl's special protector.

He was sure she was a nice girl, and that she had suffered untold misery while under the hag's control, so he determined that the old virago shouldn't lay hands on her again.

After that he was on the lookout for the harridan whenever he returned to the office, but several days passed and she did not make her appearance.

"I guess she figures that she can't make anything out of me," chuckled Dick. "She's a pretty sly old bird I should judge, and a mighty fierce one to have anything to do with."

Dick didn't dream how sly the old crone was.

He didn't suspect that she had him under watch after he got through with business for the day, in the hope that she might find out through his movements the present whereabouts of Nellie Hatton.

This, of course, was only speculation on her part, as she was by no means sure that Dick knew where the girl was.

She based her calculations on his answers to Jimmy Flynn, her tough messenger.

His attitude seemed suspicious to her, and warranted the trouble of shadowing him.

On the evening of the fifth day after leaving Nellie with Mrs. Lawrence, Dick decided to call on the girl and see how things were going with her.

So after supper he dressed himself in his Sunday suit, put on a new necktie, to purchase which he had broken one of the fives he found in the pocketbook, and started for Eagle Avenue.

He hadn't the slightest idea that he was being followed at a short distance by Jimmy Flynn.

Jimmy noted the house he entered on Eagle Avenue, and then took up his position on the opposite side of the street to watch for any developments that might happen.

Dick remained an hour inside talking to Nellie, whom he found perfectly contented with her new home.

"Mrs. Lawrence is very kind to me—almost like a mother," she said, with a happy smile. "It is like being in heaven as compared with the life I led with old Mother Dorkins. I hope I'll never see her again."

"I hope you won't," replied the boy, cheerfully. "New York is a big town, and it's like looking for a needle in a hay rick to discover the hiding-place of anybody who doesn't want you to find them. If Mother Dorkins located you, it could be by the merest accident."

That's the way he figured the matter out, little dreaming that one of the hag's spies was outside at that very moment watching the house.

When he took his leave Nellie unfortunately accompanied him to the door, and Jimmy Flynn, who knew her well by sight, saw her.

He had secured all the information he wanted, and hastened back to the old woman to make his report and collect the half dollar that was coming to him for the service he had just performed.

As soon as Mother Dorkins learned where Nellie was stopping she cackled with satisfaction, and then sent Jimmy to the nearest saloon for a pint of beer with which to celebrate her good luck.

"I'll have her back," she gritted, while Jimmy was away on the errand. "I'll have the minx back, and won't I lay it over her pretty back and shoulders when I have her in this room? I'll learn her to run away from me, the artful thing. When I get through with her she won't be able to do no more runnin' for a week. I'll pickle her, the jade!"

And she meant every word she muttered.

As coming events are said to cast their shadows before, Nellie's dreams that night bore a strong flavor of Mother Dorkins.

From one of her visions she woke up screaming, and Mrs. Lawrence, who heard her, went into the room to find out what was the matter with her.

Nellie was so willing and industrious, and had such a sweet disposition, that the lady of the house became more and more attached to her every day.

She had lost an only daughter of nearly Nellie's age, and that fact made the girl all the more solid with her.

Dick returned home delighted to know that Nellie was so happily situated, and utterly ignorant that he had unconsciously put the old harriidan that night on the girl's track.

Nellie was not the only one being plotted against that night.

Dick himself was the subject of an animated conversation between two men in a corner saloon.

These chaps, whose names were Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle, owed the young expressman a grudge, and they couldn't rest satisfied until they had paid the debt.

The reader will have no difficulty in recognizing them as the thieves who tried to get away with the express package valued at \$100.

"Now, Bunce, how are we goin' to get back at that young express chap?" said Bill Beagle. "I feel dead sore over the way he turned the trick on us the other day, and I shan't be satisfied till we've got hunk for it."

"We might lay for him and give him a good lickin', but I don't see much satisfaction in that, and there's a certain amount of risk to it, too. Now, when we take the risk of goin' to the jug, we must have some kind of a prize in sight to pay us. I don't see nothin' better than keepin' tab on that lad, and try and get away with another package."

"I know a far safer and better plan than that," replied Beagle.

"If you do, spit it out."

"We must try and learn when he has a valuable package to deliver, and the address he is to take it to. Then I'll

go to that address, and when he calls I'll represent myself as the person for whom the package is intended. I'll sign for it and skip out as soon as he drives away. Later on, when the fraud is found out, that chap will be up against it hard with his boss, who will have to make good the money value of the package. It will probably take time to put such a plan through, but the risk is hardly anything, while whatever the package fetches will be money in our pockets."

"I don't see how we can find out when such a package turns up at O'Grady's express office, and I also don't see how you are going to find out the name of the person to whom it is to be delivered," said Bunce Oliver.

"We'll call in at the express office and use our eyes. If we don't discover what we are after the first time, we'll keep on calling till we do. We can pretend that we're looking for a small valuable package that we expect to be sent to the care of O'Grady from Manhattan. That will be a good excuse to account for our calling at the express office," replied Beagle.

"All right," answered Bunce. "We'll see how your scheme pans out."

The two rascals adjourned to the bar, had another drink and walked out.

CHAPTER IV.

A SLICK THEFT.

Two days later Dick was handed a package by O'Grady to deliver at No. — Boston Road.

It was the last call on his route that morning and he reached the address just before noon.

Jumping off his seat with the package in his hand, he rushed up the steps of the house.

"Oh, you've got here at last," said a man, with a pair of side whiskers, stepping out of the vestibule between the outer and inner doors. "I've been waitin' an hour for that package."

The man spoke with such an air of confidence that Dick was thrown off his guard.

"Are you John Walters?" he said.

"I am. The charges are paid, I guess."

"Yes. Just sign on that line," and the boy handed him his receipt sheet and a pencil.

The man signed "John Walters" with a flourish, took the package, and stood in the doorway apparently studying the superscription on it, but actually furtively watching the departure of the young expressman.

As soon as Dick drove off down the street, he ran down the stairs and started for the nearest corner.

There he was joined by his friend Bunce, for the man with the whiskers was really Bill Beagle in disguise.

"I've got it," said Beagle, in a tone of triumph.

"I see you have," replied Bunce.

"It was so easy that it was almost a shame to work the dodge," chuckled the other.

"There'll be trouble to burn when John Walters reports at O'Grady's that he didn't get the package, and repudiates his autograph."

"What do we care?"

"Nothin'. I see it is valued at \$75. I wonder what's in it, and whether we can raise \$50 on it."

"We'll find out later on when we open it."

The men walked on and presently disappeared in the distance.

When Dick got back to the office he found a gentleman talking to O'Grady.

"Here he is now," said the expressman. "When did you leave that package at Mr. Walters' house, Dick?"

"Less than twenty minutes ago. It was the last thing I delivered," replied Dick. "Mr. Walters signed for it himself."

"I guess you're mistaken, young man," said the gentleman. "I am Mr. Walters, and I haven't seen the package. As I left the house about eleven o'clock I couldn't very well have been there when you called."

Dick was rather taken aback by this statement.

"The person I handed it to came out of the vestibule when I ran up the steps. He said he had been waiting for it. I asked him if he was John Walters, and he said he was. He signed for it," and Dick took his receipt sheet out of his pocket and pointed to the signature executed by the disguised Bill Beagle.

"Well, that isn't my signature, and the man wasn't John Walters. What sort of looking person was he?"

Dick described Beagle.

"I don't know him," replied Walters. "What did he do after taking the package?"

"I left him standing on the stoop."

"Why did you leave that package with a man you didn't know to be the right party?" demanded O'Grady, beginning to see trouble ahead.

"Because he said his name was Walters, and he came out of the house just as if he belonged there."

"Why didn't you ring the bell and make sure that you were leaving the package with the right person?"

"Because he acted as if he was the right person," protested Dick.

"Well," said Mr. Walters, "I'm of the opinion somebody got that package who was not entitled to it. I don't recognize him as my brother-in-law, who wouldn't be home at that hour anyway, nor a neighbor. If the package isn't at my house when I go back, I'll have to hold you responsible for it, Mr. O'Grady."

"Confound you, Dick Osborn," roared the expressman, his face as black as a thunder cloud, "I may have to pay for that package owing to your stupidity. If I do, you'll have to make it up out of your wages."

As Dick's wages were small he rebelled at the idea of being obliged to lose his pay for many weeks, for he knew the value put on the package was \$75.

Mr. O'Grady was mad enough to chew a ten-penny nail, and when Mr. Walters departed he gave it to Dick hot and heavy.

As he could swear like a trooper, and was not choice in his words generally, the atmosphere of the little office tingled for a good quarter of an hour.

Finally Dick got disgusted.

Although he was far from being a young Christian himself, he did not swear nor use vulgar expressions.

This was saying a whole lot for him, considering his association with a man of O'Grady's stamp.

"Say, you've cussed me enough, don't you think?" he remonstrated.

"No, I hain't half given you what you deserve," snarled the expressman, "nor half what you'll get if I have to pay for that package."

"It's a wonder you don't get tired swearing. A man like you, who goes to church regularly every Sunday morning, ought to know better."

"Don't you give me any of your impudence or I'll swat you in the jaw," snorted O'Grady.

"You wouldn't swat me twice if I could help it," returned Dick, doggedly.

"What's that?" roared the expressman, bristling up.

"You heard what I said. There is no need of me repeating it."

O'Grady stared at him in astonished rage.

"You young whelp! How dare you talk back to me?" he shouted, adding one of his choice expletives to give added force. "You go upstairs and get your dinner, and then get a move on you with these bundles and them two trunks."

"I will as soon as I've given the horse his oats," replied Dick, picking up the bag and taking it outside.

After attending to the animal he went to his own dinner.

Twenty minutes afterward he was loading up the wagon for his next trip.

Before he had completed the operation a messenger came from the gentleman on Boston Road stating that the package had not been received by anybody connected with his house, and therefore it was up to Mr. O'Grady to recover it or make it good.

The expressman on receiving the note, went on like a wild man.

What he didn't call Dick is hardly worth mentioning.

"You'll pay for it yourself, you blamed young fool," he cried. "Every cent shall come out of your wages."

"Aren't you going to make an attempt to find out who took the package from me and represented himself to be John Walters? I think you ought to notify the police at once."

"The police be jiggered! They wouldn't do anythin'. Besides, there ain't no clue except your description, and the man might have been disguised for all you know," replied O'Grady.

"If you say I've got to pay for it, I'm going to try and look the thief up. I recovered a package worth \$100 last week that had been taken from the wagon while I was delivering a box."

"You did? You never said anythin' to me about it," said O'Grady in a tone of some surprise.

"I didn't see any need of reporting the fact as long as I got the package away from the rascals," replied Dick.

"Who were they? A couple of thieving boys?"

"No, they were men. And now I recall the fact, the fellow I captured and got the box away from told me that he and his associate would get square with me. Maybe it was one of them who fooled me to-day."

"You ought to have recognized him if it was one of them."

"The fellow who got the Walters package had side whiskers, while those men were smoothly shaven. Maybe the whiskers were false."

"I reckon they were, and I guess you needn't waste no

time trying to catch that chap. He got away with the package, and you'll never see him again."

Dick was willing to admit that the chances of finding the slick thief were pretty slim, but he determined to make a try at it just the same.

He had a strong notion that the rascal who got away with the Walters package was one of the two who had tried to rob the wagon the preceding week.

As it seemed probable that they were hanging around the Bronx, and as his business took him to every part of the borough at one time or another, he determined to be on the lookout for the two men.

With this determination he jumped on the seat of the wagon with his afternoon load and drove off.

CHAPTER V.

HOW DICK GETS A LINE ON THE STOLEN EXPRESS PACKAGE.

Dick felt rather blue that afternoon to think that his meager wages were to suffer for the mistake he had made.

"It will take every cent I earn for three months to square up that matter, and will leave me mighty short in funds in spite of the few dollars I've saved and the money I found in the wallet the other day," thought Dick, as he drove along. "It's a shame that the whole thing is taxed on me. If I've left one package I've left a hundred in the same way. We expressmen can't always tell that the person receipting for the goods is not the right person. The supposition is that he is. Now I am always reasonably careful. That chap must have known that that package was expected at the house and was on the watch for it. At any rate, he said he was looking for it for an hour, and that made me think he was the right party. I think Mr. O'Grady ought to stand half the loss, as he's making good money, but it isn't likely he will."

While Dick was at supper that evening a small boy came to the house with a note for him.

On opening it he saw that it was from Mrs. Lawrence.

She wanted Dick to come over as soon as he could.

She was greatly worried over the prolonged and unexplained absence of Nellie, whom she had sent to the grocer's at the corner of Westchester Avenue, not a block away, and already two hours had elapsed and the girl had not come back.

"I am afraid something has happened to her," she concluded. "As I know you take a great interest in her welfare, I wanted you to come over, and if she isn't home by that time, you had better try and look her up."

"Gee! I hope Mother Dorkins hasn't got hold of her again. If she has, I'll bet I'll lay it all over that old harridan, if I go to jail for doing it," muttered the young expressman.

He hastily finished his supper, put on his hat and started for Eagle Avenue.

On reaching Mrs. Lawrence's house he found that lady in considerable distress, for Nellie had not shown up.

"She might have been run down by an automobile and carried to a hospital, or she might have been captured by that old woman she used to live with," said Mrs. Lawrence.

"The latter is the most likely," replied Dick. "I know where the old crone lives, and if she's got Nellie in her

clutches I'll get her away if I have to knock her block off to do it. That hag ought to be up in the woman's prison. She's a corking hard case."

"I should judge she is from what Nellie has told me about her. It is terrible to even imagine that the dear child is back again in her power."

"Well, you can take my word for it that if she is, there will be something doing when I get over at the Dorkins crib. She'll find I'm the toughest customer she ever tackled. I'm ready to fight to the last gasp for Nellie's sake."

Dick grabbed his hat and left the house, promising Mrs. Lawrence that he would bring Nellie back or she wouldn't see him again.

As he had little doubt but Nellie was in Mother Dorkins's clutches, he made a beeline for the part of the Bronx where the hag lived.

It was nearly ten o'clock when he reached the block which had witnessed his scrap with the old woman, and the recollection of that affair made him realize that he had embarked in a pretty tough job.

But he was willing to go through a whole lot for Nellie's sake.

His blood boiled as he thought of the treatment the crone was likely to deal out to the girl for running away from her.

There were numbers of large boys and girls sitting around the doors of the tenements at that hour, though the smaller fry were tucked away in their little beds.

He began making inquiries about Mother Dorkins, and whether any one had seen her bring the girl to her home.

He knew it would have been impossible for anything to happen in that block without the knowledge of the greater part of the inhabitants.

The information he secured was that Mother Dorkins, accompanied by a hard looking man, had been seen to leave her tenement just before dusk, bound westward, and neither she nor the man had been seen since.

Dick felt that his investigations in this direction were blocked.

Clearly the old woman, if she had captured the girl, had not brought her back to this locality.

He had confidently expected to find Nellie with the hag in the tenement, and his disappointment was keen.

It began to look to him as if the old woman was too foxy to bring Nellie back to a spot where she could be easily located by himself, and especially when the crone knew that all the neighbors were decidedly hostile to her.

Dick grew alarmed as he figured on Mother Dorkins having taken Nellie to some other low neighborhood, probably in the lower part of Manhattan, where doubtless she was well known, in which event he might not be able to get on her track.

Before leaving ——— Street Dick went into the tenement where the old woman had been living and tried the doors of her miserable apartments.

They were locked and there was no light nor sound inside to indicate that she or any one else was there.

He hung around the block for some time on the bare chance that she might turn up, but when eleven o'clock came, he gave it up and walked disconsolately toward Third Avenue.

When he reached Westchester Avenue he turned toward Eagle Avenue, which crossed that thoroughfare, and went to Mrs. Lawrence's house.

"Has Nellie got back?" he asked, as the lady opened the door.

"No," she replied, "she has not. Haven't you learned anything about her?"

"Not a thing. She isn't at the old hag's rooms, neither is Mother Dorkins herself."

Then he told Mrs. Lawrence the unfruitful result of his investigations, and how the woman and a tough man had been seen to leave the tenement before dark and go in the direction of Third Avenue.

"You had better go to the police station and notify the captain of Nellie's disappearance. Tell him all about her connection with the horrid old woman, and how you believe her persecutor has managed to kidnap her in some way. Do this at once, and beg him to take the matter in hand without delay."

"I will," replied the boy, bidding Mrs. Lawrence good-night and starting for the station, which was within a short block of the O'Grady express office.

On reaching the station he found that the captain was not around, so he explained the situation to the officer in charge at the desk.

The policeman listened to him, would advance no opinion on the matter, but promised to attend to it.

Dick thought he showed little interest in so important a circumstance as a young girl's probable kidnapping by a rascally woman.

The police, however, are constantly receiving complaints of all kinds, and unless backed up with influence they do not take hold in a way that an outsider, who is only interested in his own case, is pleased to note.

It was close on to midnight when Dick walked out of the station.

He was only a block from his home, but he did not feel like going to bed with the uncertainty of Nellie's fate on his mind.

He was not at all satisfied with the way matters stood.

While he stood thinking about the girl in the shadow of a building adjoining the fence fronting on the precinct station, two men, one carrying a small grip, passed along between him and the gas lamp.

He saw their faces clearly, and he knew them at once as the thieves who had tried to get away with the \$100 package.

They were walking toward 161st Street.

"I'm going to follow them," he muttered. "That chap on the outside, if he had side whiskers, would look very like the man who signed for the Walters package this noon. I wouldn't be at all surprised if it really was him."

Dick proceeded to shadow the two rascals.

they reached 162d Street they started up the stairs to the elevated station.

"They're going downtown," thought Dick. "I'll go, too."

He allowed the men to go out on the platform before he bought his ticket, and he did not follow them outside until the train came in.

Then, pulling his hat well down over his eyes, he entered the same car they did.

They took a double seat with their backs to him.

He daringly took the corner side seat behind them, and turning up his jacket collar and laying his head against the back of their seat, tried to hear what they were talking about.

"I'm afraid Moses won't give us more than \$30 at the outside for the contents of that package," said Bunce Oliver.

"He'll give us \$40 at least, or we'll take it to Solomons," replied Bill Beagle, with a threatening shake of his head.

"Solomons is just as big a shark as Moses," answered Bunce.

"Yes, they're all sharks for that matter, but they can't do me up very bad, for I won't stand for it where I know the real value of the stuff I offer them," said Beagle.

"That's a fine bit of goods you collared this mornin'. It's worth every cent of the \$75 the sender valued it at."

"You bet your life it is. That's why I don't intend to let Moses have it for a song. He's got to ante up, for he can easily get \$75 for it, and he knows where to work such things off his hands at their full value."

Dick had heard enough to satisfy him that the man with the grip was the chap who got the express package that day under false pretensions.

Judging from the men's conversation, they had the contents of the package with them in the grip, and were taking it to some "fence" to dispose of it.

He intended to cause their arrest by the first policeman he met en route, or failing in meeting one, to snatch the grip from the thief and make off with it.

After a long ride downtown the men got off the train at the Grand Street station, and Dick followed them.

He kept his eyes skinned for an officer, but before one appeared the men turned into a side street, and finally stopped before the door of a small brick private house.

This was where Moses, the "fence," lived and carried on his business with the crooks of his acquaintance.

No one could get past the portal until Moses, through a small slit in the door, had passed upon the visitor's identity.

The bright light which shone overhead enabled him to see the countenance of his caller distinctly.

If the light was out it was useless to try and do business with Moses that night, for he couldn't be seen, though you might ring his bell till you got tired.

Dick, surmising that the rascals had arrived at their destination and finding that he could not look to a policeman for help, decided that he would have to act himself at once if the contents of the express package was to be recovered.

So walking quickly forward with his head down to escape recognition, as he came opposite the men he suddenly reached out his hand, snatched the grip from Beagle's fingers, and started on a dead run up the street.

CHAPTER VI.

DICK DISCOVERS THE NEW CRIB OF MOTHER DORKINS.

Dick's action was so unexpected that the men were paralyzed by his nerve, and before they started in pursuit, he had secured a start of many yards.

This, added to the fact that he was a fleet runner, gave him all the advantage he needed, for he had no fear of a policeman if he met one.

Beagle and Oliver did not recognize him, but took him for some young crook who did not believe in honor among thieves.

They were both mad clear through at the possibility of losing the plunder they were about to dispose of for the money they badly needed.

They did not deem it prudent to raise any hue and cry, but trusted to overtake the boy by a burst of speed.

The street was comparatively silent and deserted at that hour, though the district was a thickly populated one.

Dick saw he was holding his own and he darted around the first corner he came to.

Increasing his speed he gained several yards on them before they came in view.

He flew around the next corner and repeated his former spurt.

The two rascals saw that he was getting away, and in desperation they exerted themselves to the utmost.

After dodging around several more corners without being able to throw them off his track, he decided on a ruse to effect his object.

The door of a very common tenement stood invitingly open.

Dick ran in, and flew up the badly lighted stairs to the first landing.

Then he stopped and looked down over the rickety banisters.

The two rascals rushed past the building in hot haste, and not seeing the boy ahead, came to the conclusion that he had entered one of the buildings.

As there were at least six tenements, all very much alike, on that side of the block, the question was which house had he gone into.

The two men could not tell, and so they found themselves off the scent.

"He's given us the slip, hang him," cried Beagle. "What in thunder are we to do now?"

"Blessed if I know," returned Bunce, with several imprecations.

"He probably lives in the building he slipped into, and by this time he's hid away in his own hole. There isn't one chance in a hundred of our catching him now if we entered every one of the buildings."

"If you had had a tighter grip on the bag this wouldn't have happened," growled Bunce.

"The fellow took me off my guard, and he had the grip in his hands and was off before I knew what he was about," said Beagle.

"He's a pretty slick rooster. I'd like to catch him. Blamed if I wouldn't make him look two ways for Sunday," snarled Bunce.

"I'd kick the stuffin' out of him if I laid my hands on him. If we can't recover that grip we're as good as \$40 out of pocket, and we need the money the worst way."

"That's right; but I don't see how we're goin' to find him now."

"He may be hidin' in the hallway of one of these houses. You stay out here and watch and I'll go into each one in turn," said Beagle.

"Go ahead. I'll keep my eye on the row. If he comes out while you're in, I'll chase him."

So Beagle began an investigation of the houses, going up the stairs and the hallways of each in turn.

While he was thus engaged Dick came downstairs to see if the coast was clear.

He stuck his head cautiously out of the door and saw Bunce Oliver standing on the edge of the sidewalk three houses away.

He wasn't sure of the man's identity in the dark, but he suspected he might be one of his pursuers, so he wouldn't risk showing himself.

He wondered where the other man was.

While he stood there he heard footsteps and voices descending the stairs.

He drew back into the darkness of the unlighted entry.

One of the persons was a woman, and evidently an old one by the hoarse tones of her voice.

"You get a wagon in the mornin' and take all my things out of the rooms on ——— Street and fetch 'em down here," Dick heard her say. "I ain't goin' back there no more. Look out for any plain clothes cops. The woman Nell has been hidin' with will put the perlice on to me in the mornin' I'll bet, thinkin' I've got hold of her. Then that kid will be lookin' me up as soon as hears the gal is gone. If I'm pinched they'll call it kidnappin', and I don't want no trouble of that kind."

Dick's heart gave a jump when he heard the woman's words.

This was Mother Dorkins, and he had accidentally taken shelter in the very tenement where Nellie was doubtless held a prisoner at that moment.

He hugged himself for joy to think he had killed two birds with one stone.

He had recovered the stolen package and discovered the roosting place of the old hag at the same time.

He felt almost grateful to the two rascals for bringing him downtown.

While he was glad to have the package in his possession, it was a secondary matter when compared with the welfare of Nellie Hatton.

Creeping forward, he listened eagerly for further information.

"I'll look after your things, old woman, don't you worry," replied the man. "I won't bring 'em direct here. I'm not such a fool. That would leave a trail for the cops to follow. I'll take 'em to my own crib first. Later on I'll get another expressman to fetch 'em here. That'll break the scent."

"That's clever," cackled Mother Dorkins, approvingly. "You can't be too sly when you want to be on the safe side. That's the way I do business. I never take any more chances than I can help. No, no; it doesn't pay."

"That's right. You're about as sharp as they come, old woman," replied the man, with a dry laugh.

Mother Dorkins cackled again as if pleased with the compliment.

"That's what they all say," she replied, rubbing her withered old hands over one another as if washing them in invisible soap and water.

"Well, I must be off. I'll see you to-morrow night. I guess the gal won't get away from you again in a hurry."

"I'll warrant she won't. I gave her a taste to-night as you saw of what's comin' to her. To-morrer she'll get more; and every day till I have reduced her to the proper spirit. I'll learn her to know her place. When she's eddicated to the right tune, I'm goin' to send her out to make money for me as she did afore that young imp butted in and sp'iled her on me. I'd like to get hold of him, too. I owe him for layin' me out. I'd like to flay the flesh off his bones," she hissed, vindictively.

"If you want me to help you get hold of him just let me know," said the man.

"We'll see in good time. There's no hurry. I've a long memory. Some day we'll catch him nappin'. Some day when he's forgot all about me, and then—ha, ha, ha! There'll be somethin' doin'. I'll make him remember Mother Dorkins all the days of his life. I never forget nor forgive. I always get my revenge no matter how long I wait, and the longer I wait the sweeter it is when it comes."

The old haridan cackled once more as if she revelled in the prospect of deferred vengeance when the victim had forgotten what she owed him.

"Good night, old woman. I'm off for my crib for a snooze."

"Good night, and luck to you, Bill Wiggins."

The man departed and the old hag hobbled back upstairs as fast as she could go.

Dick whipped off his shoes and followed her as noiselessly as a shadow.

She led him to the top of the house, and there he saw her enter a door of a room on the south side of the tenement.

At that moment Bill Beagle entered the building and began his investigations of the entry and landings as he had done unsuccessfully throughout the other houses.

His failure to find the object of his pursuit in the other tenements had rather dampened his expectations of better results in this building; but he was a persevering fellow, and always carried anything he undertook through from start to finish.

This was the last of the six big tenements, and if he didn't find the chap who had pinched his grip here, he would have to give the job up, consequently he came up the stairs in a mighty bad humor.

Dick, standing far above, heard him groping his way up and about.

He naturally thought it was one of the tenants of the house.

Had he had any idea it was the man from whom he had so deftly taken the grip he held in his hand, he would have been greatly excited and not a little alarmed as to the possible consequences to himself, for he knew he was in a hard locality and could look for no help from the dwellers of that neighborhood.

Up came Beagle, muttering imprecations under his breath as he found his quest drawing to a fruitless termination.

Finally he reached the last pair of stairs and Dick slunk into a dark corner to wait for him to enter one of the doors, which he confidently expected he would do.

Beagle was tired with his exertions and came up slowly.

At last he stepped on to the landing, stopped to recover

his breath, and then drawing a match from his pocket, struck it.

The gleam flashed in his face and then it was that Dick recognized him.

"Good Lord!" the young expressman ejaculated. "It's the fellow from whom I took the grip. Either this is where he lives or he's searching for me. If he sees me, there'll be something doing, sure."

He squeezed himself further back into the corner, and breathlessly awaited the turn of events.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH DICK RESCUES NELLIE FROM MOTHER DORKINS.

Beagle held the match up and looked around.

Before he had completed his survey of the landing it burned down and scorched his fingers.

He dropped it with an imprecation and lit another.

Then he advanced toward the end where Dick crouched in the corner.

The boy saw he could not escape detection, so he determined to take the man by surprise if he could.

Springing up, he dashed at Beagle and planted a blow in his face before the rascal could put himself on his guard.

The fellow staggered back with a smothered cry.

Dick followed him up and hit him again in the dark.

The blow was delivered at haphazard, but it landed on Beagle's chin.

He threw up his hands to recover his balance and stepped back.

Unfortunately for him, the stairs were directly behind him and he toppled over.

He uttered a loud cry and went rolling down the stairs, making a great racket.

The clatter brought several tenants to their doors.

Dick rushed down after the fallen man, wondering what injury the fellow had received from his tumble.

Beagle lay unconscious and bleeding at the bottom of the short flight.

"What's the matter with the man? Is he drunk?" asked a tenant, clad only in a shirt and trousers.

He addressed the remark to Dick, who was raising the rascal up.

"Guess he must be, to tumble downstairs," replied the boy, not daring to enter into a true explanation of the cause of the trouble.

"He doesn't belong in this house, anyway," said the tenant, flashing a match in Beagle's face. "He must be drunk to come in here. Has he broken his neck? I guess you'd better hunt up a cop and have an ambulance sent for. He seems to be in a bad way."

Dick wasn't anxious to leave the building, as he suspected the fellow's companion was outside waiting for him.

He was in a dilemma, as he had left the grip on the landing above, and he caught a glimpse of Mother Dorkins and two other persons leaning over the rail looking down.

"Give me a lift with him," he said to the tenant, who was now joined by two others.

"What are you goin' to do with him?"

"Take him down to the ground floor," replied the boy.

The tenant took Beagle by the head and shoulders while

Dick grabbed him by the feet, and in this way they bore him down to the main hallway.

The young expressman looked out at the door and saw Bunce Oliver standing outside, evidently waiting for his companion.

Here was more trouble awaiting him, and Dick was puzzled what to do.

He wanted to return to the top floor for the grip, and also to rescue Nellie, but he didn't see how he could do either with the tenement partly aroused.

The man who had helped him down with the unconscious Beagle expected him to go and hunt up a policeman, but he was afraid if he made a bluff to do it that the rascal outside would recognize him and try to nab him.

Finally he decided that he'd have to risk it, so he opened the door and walked out.

Bunce saw him at once and stepped forward.

"Seen a cop around here?" Dick asked him, making no attempt to run.

"What d'ye want with a cop?" asked Bunce, looking sharply at him.

"A man who doesn't belong in our house fell down a flight of stairs, and I guess he's badly hurt. I want to get an ambulance."

This reply diverted Bunce's thoughts to his companion, who had been taking an uncommonly long time in going through the tenement.

Believing the injured man was Beagle, Bunce rushed inside to find his suspicions realized, and Dick took immediate advantage of his action to walk as far as the corner, after taking note of the number of the tenement.

The name of the street was on the corner lamppost.

Standing where he could see the door of the tenement, Dick waited to see what would happen.

In about ten minutes he saw Bunce come out, supporting his associate, who had recovered his senses, but was acting in a groggy way.

They walked off down the street together and Dick soon lost sight of them.

"I'll bet they're furious over the loss of the grip," chuckled the young expressman. "I'm certain that they didn't recognize me, so they'll lay their trouble to some tough boy down here. I got out of that scrape pretty well, but I've still got serious work to do. I've got to recover the grip, if it hasn't been spied out and appropriated by one of the top floor tenants, and then I've got to rescue Nellie if I can. That's by far the toughest job before me."

He waited around the corner for a good half hour, and then satisfied he could venture back with safety, he started for the tenement.

All was quiet inside as he expected to find it.

He removed his shoes and walked up to the top floor.

Going to the corner where he left the grip, he discovered that it was still there.

Striking a match he opened it and found two valuable household ornaments in it, evidently what the express package had contained.

He put one in each of his outside pockets, and then abandoned the grip.

"Now to face the old woman," he muttered, going toward the door he had seen her enter when he followed her upstairs.

To his surprise it was not locked, and he softly pushed it in.

A dim light was burning on a box in the center of the room.

The place was entirely unfurnished, with the exception of two cheap mattresses lying together on the floor.

On the one against the wall lay Nellie, sound asleep and fully dressed,

Her arms were bound against her sides, and her ankles were also bound, the loose end of the rope being attached to the arm of the hag who was asleep on the outside mattress.

She couldn't move her foot to any extent without arousing the old woman.

Dick looked at them both and wondered how he should proceed.

As a preliminary he left the door ajar, then he crept toward the beds.

He judged that the harridan was a light sleeper, and he was fearful she might awake at any moment.

Drawing his stout pocketknife he worked around until within easy reach of Nellie's feet, then he cut the cords about her ankles, pushing the severed rope toward the old woman.

Next he crawled between the girl and the wall and cut the cord that held her arms.

All this was successfully accomplished without waking the hag.

The most difficult part of the job was yet to be done.

He had to awaken Nellie.

She would be sure to make some kind of an outcry and no doubt struggle, thinking it was the old woman who had hold of her.

It was a delicate task, but it had to be done, and he was prepared for a fierce scrap with Mother Dorkins.

Bending over Nellie, he placed one hand on her mouth and whispered her name in her ear as he gently shook her.

She awoke in a moment and tried to scream, but Dick prevented her.

"Be quiet, Nellie," he whispered. "It is I—Dick."

Her startled eyes now seemed to recognize him.

"Oh, Dick! Save me!" came between his fingers.

"Hush!" he whispered, releasing her mouth and putting his arms around her.

As he lifted her on her feet the hag awoke and sprang up with a cry.

She recognized Dick even in the dim light and, seizing a short club which lay beside the mattress, sprang at him like a tigress.

Dick dropped Nellie, ducked the club and, grabbing the old woman, tripped her up on the mattress.

The club fell from her hand, but she struggled desperately, uttering the most horrible yells.

"Quick, Nellie, tie her arms while I hold her down," said the boy.

"If you dare, you jade, I'll murder you as sure as I live," hissed the harridan.

"Don't mind her, Nellie; do as I say," said Dick.

The girl, however, stood too much in fear of the old woman to obey him, though her liberty depended on it.

Seeing how frightened Nellie was, Dick felt obliged to adopt the roughest kind of tactics with the crone.

He grabbed her by her withered wrists and, forcing her down, tightened his grip.

She fought him back like a wild animal or a mad dog might do.

Dick's energies were aroused.

He remembered what the old woman had told her friend, Bill Wiggins, in the hall below, of having given Nellie a taste of what was coming to her, and how she meant to repeat the dose daily until she had beaten all the spirit out of the girl, and the thought angered him.

Mother Dorkins was a woman, it is true, but she was a disgrace to her sex, and entitled to no consideration at all.

So he treated her just as he would have handled a man under like circumstances.

He meted out to her the same mercy she gave to Nellie, which was none at all.

He seized the cords which had bound the girl and tied the old woman's arms behind her back.

After that he tied her ankles and gagged her.

"That settles you for the present, you old hag," he muttered. "Lie there till somebody releases you, and may that not be soon."

Nellie stood by and watched him with terrified eyes.

"Come, Nellie," he said, getting on his feet, "I'm going to take you right back to Mrs. Lawrence. Where's your hat?"

It was hanging from a nail on the wall, and he got it for her, and put it on her, for she seemed too dazed to do anything for herself.

Then he led her out of the room, put on his shoes, and with his arm thrown protectingly about her, took her down to the street.

It was between two and three in the morning, and not a soul was to be seen anywhere.

"Oh, Dick, Dick," cried Nellie, bursting into a flood of tears, "how can I thank you enough for getting me away from Mother Dorkins?"

"Don't worry about thanking me," he replied, forcing her along. "How did she get hold of you?"

"Mrs. Lawrence sent me to the grocery store where she trades for some sugar. I was coming out of the store when a rough-looking man grabbed me and said I must come with him. I screamed and a crowd gathered. He said he was my father, and that I had run away from home and he was going to take me back. I cried and struggled to escape, and said he was not my father—that I didn't know him at all; but the people seemed afraid to interfere, or else they believed him. At any rate, they would not help me, and he forced me down the street. Half way down the block Mother Dorkins came up and grabbed me, and called me a bad girl for running away from home. They then put me in a wagon and drove off down to this place. I was too frightened to do anything more, and so I was brought up to this room, where she gave me a terrible beating, which she said was only the beginning. She said she intended to half kill me before she was through with me, and I gave up all hope of ever seeing you or Mrs. Lawrence again. How did you find me?"

Dick told her in as few words as possible how Mrs. Lawrence had sent for him to tell him that she (Nellie) had not returned from an errand, though more than two hours

had then gone by, and that she was greatly worried over her unexplained absence.

He went on to say that suspecting Mother Dorkins was at the bottom of it he had gone over to the block where he had first met Nellie, expecting to find her in her old quarters.

Not finding any trace of her he had returned to Mrs. Lawrence, who had advised him to go to the police station and notify the authorities of her supposed abduction, which he had done.

He then told her about his adventure with the two rascals implicated in the stealing of the express package, and how that had led him right to the tenement where he discovered the old woman had taken refuge with her victim.

"On the whole, I've done a pretty good night's work, for I've recovered the contents of the stolen package and I've rescued you, Nellie. I'm only sorry it was impossible for me to land Mother Dorkins in jail; but she'll get there yet. You and I, with Mrs. Lawrence, will go to the police station as soon as possible and tell the story of all your trouble with the hag, and have her arrested and locked up. Once we get her behind the bars I don't think she'll trouble you again. She ought to get ten or fifteen years, and that should finish her for good."

"Oh, Dick, I shall never forget how good you've been to me—never," cried the girl gratefully.

"That's all right. I told you I'd be a brother to you, and I've only done as I would for you had you really been my sister."

"I wish I were your sister."

"Well, we can be brother and sister in our own minds just as well as not, if you are satisfied to have it that way," he replied. "Do you wish it?"

"Yes."

"Then consider the matter settled," he said, drawing her to him and kissing her.

She smiled happily in his face, and a few minutes afterward they were standing on the Grand Street elevated station waiting for a north-bound train to take them up to the Bronx.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK SECURES A BETTER JOB.

It was about four o'clock when Dick rang Mrs. Lawrence out of bed.

The good lady had slept scarcely any that night so troubled was she over the whereabouts of Nellie Hatton.

She came to the door in a wrapper and the moment she saw the girl, she grabbed her in her arms with a little exclamation of joy.

Nellie laid her head on her shoulder and burst into tears.

"Come in, Dick, and tell me where you found her," said Mrs. Lawrence.

"Mother Dorkins had her, and it was only by the luckiest chance in the world that I discovered her new crib, which is way downtown on the east side, not so very far from Grand Street," replied the boy.

"My goodness! So far down as that?" cried the lady.

"Yes," answered Dick, and then he proceeded to tell her the whole story of his night's adventures from the moment he last left her house to go to the police station.

"You are a most remarkable boy, Dick Osborn," said Mrs. Lawrence, admiringly. "Nellie ought to be grateful to you as long as she lives."

"I will be," said the girl, taking the boy's hand and laying her head on his shoulders.

Mrs. Lawrence smiled at the confiding attitude of Nellie.

"I guess you two think a good deal of one another by this time," she remarked.

"We certainly do," answered Dick. "Don't we, Nellie?"

"Yes. We have promised to be brother and sister to each other."

Mrs. Lawrence smiled again, and then told Dick she guessed it was time for him to return home and get a few winks of sleep.

"No sleep!" laughed Dick. "Not till to-night. I will reach Mr. O'Grady's just about the time I usually get up to attend to the horse. When I'm through with him Mrs. O'Grady will have breakfast ready, and then it will be me to the office to open up and get things in shape for my first trip. I start out about nine. You and Nellie ought to be over by that hour in order to get Mr. O'Grady to let me off long enough to go to the police station with you to tell our stories to the captain so that he may get busy about capturing Mother Dorkins."

"We will be there at nine o'clock," replied Mrs. Lawrence, and then Dick took his leave.

Mr. O'Grady was rather astonished when Dick showed him the two household ornaments which he had recovered from the man who got away with the express package, and told him the story of what he had been through that night.

"That saves you a pretty penny, my boy," said the expressman, pleased to think that he wouldn't have to pay the value of the stolen package. "You can deliver them to Mr. Walters this morning, and explain how you got them back."

Mrs. Lawrence called with Nellie at the office at nine o'clock, and Mr. O'Grady obligingly let Dick go to the police station with them.

The captain heard their stories, asked a number of questions, and finally telephoned the address of the old hag to Headquarters on Mulberry Street, and asked for her arrest.

When detectives went to the tenement they found that the old woman had been released from the pickle in which Dick had left her, and that she had prudently flown the coop, to use a slang phrase.

All efforts made to find her were unavailing, though Bill Wiggins was arrested, taken to Headquarters and put through a course of sprouts.

He swore he hadn't seen her since the preceding evening.

Nellie was sent for and she recognized Wiggins as the man who had acted a prominent part in her abduction from the corner of Eagle and Westchester Avenues.

Accordingly he was held to await the action of the Grand Jury, and as he could not find any one willing to bail him out, he went to the Tombs to stay.

Enough was printed in the newspapers about the matter to convince Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle, who always read the papers, that the boy who got the grip away from the latter was none other than the young expressman himself.

"How in thunder did he ever track us to Moses's crib?"

growled Bunce at the conference between himself and Beagle.

"How should I know?" snarled his companion. "One thing I do know, though, and that is I'm goin' to get square with him for the layin' out he gave me."

"And I'll help you," replied Bunce.

They spent an hour figuring out some scheme of vengeance on the boy.

Their plotting came to naught, however, for that afternoon both were arrested for a small crime in which they had been concerned and were lodged in the Tombs.

They were subsequently tried, convicted and sent to the Island for six months.

Mrs. Lawrence was careful to send Nellie on errands only in broad daylight, and the girl kept a sharp lookout for any emissary of Mother Dorkins.

Weeks passed by and Nellie was not molested, so that even Dick began to think that the old hag had given the girl up for good.

Nothing, however, was further from the old harridan's mind.

She had it in for both Nellie and her stalwart young protector, and she was simply biding her time.

She had found it prudent to leave her stamping grounds in New York and go to Boston for a while until she thought the police had let her slip from their memory.

But during the whole time of her compulsory banishment from Greater New York she consoled herself with the thought that the time would come when she would get square with Dick and Nellie, and she often grinned ghastly grins, and cackled maliciously as she pictured to herself the revenge she would take on them both.

Bill Wiggins was duly brought to trial for his share in Nellie's abduction, and the jury that listened to the evidence in the case lost little time in bringing in a verdict of "Guilty."

The judge didn't like his face, nor the record of his past performances as presented by the police, and handed him out ten years, so Wiggins went to Sing Sing, where he found plenty of time to reflect on the axiom, "the way of the transgressor is hard."

It was about this time that Dick and Mr. O'Grady parted company.

Through some influence that Mrs. Lawrence brought to bear at certain quarters Dick secured a job as assistant to the baggage agent of the Erie Railroad in Jersey City, and he removed his few personal belongings to that town.

He did not fail, however, to come over once a week to the Bronx to call on Mrs. Lawrence and Nellie, whom the lady now regarded almost as a daughter, and these visits were a source of great happiness to the girl, and of great pleasure to Dick himself.

Thus three months more passed away, and by that time Bunce Oliver and his associate, Bill Beagle, were discharged from Blackwell's Island prison, their time being up.

The day they stepped on Manhattan soil once more, Mother Dorkins returned from her sequestration in Boston, and, strange to relate, the three came together in a low joint that night.

Over a bottle of bad whiskey they grew communicative,

and before long Bunce and his friend Beagle learned of the grudge that the hag bore Dick Osborn.

"Well, you don't hate him any more than we do," said Beagle, with an imprecation.

"You know him!" she asked, in surprise.

"Do we know him? Well, I guess we do," he answered, and thereupon acquainted the harridan with the circumstances in which they and Dick were involved.

Mother Dorkins cackled shrilly.

"Are you willin' to help me get square with him?" she asked.

"Are we? We are goin' to get square with him on our own account; but if it's any satisfaction for you to join us you can stand in as much as you want."

"No, no, you must help me. Catch him for me and I'll fix him myself afterward. And you must help me get the gal, too. I want 'em both. Get the gal first and him next. You shall take the place of Bill Wiggins, who's doin' his time up the river. A fine man was Bill, but he got pinched, more's the pity."

By the time they had finished two bottles of whiskey between them, which the old woman paid for, they had come to a perfect understanding.

They separated in the early hours of the morning, agreeing to meet in a day or two to arrange their plans.

During the interval Bunce and Beagle went to the Bronx to take close note of Dick's movements.

Then, to their great disappointment, they found that Dick was no longer in Mr. O'Grady's employ.

Where he had gone they couldn't find out, but they determined not to rest until they got on his track.

When they met the old woman again she had a plan for the capture of Nellie.

They told her about the disappearance of Dick.

"Never mind," she said. "We'll find him in good time. As soon as the girl is in my power you'll find that he'll come huntin' after her, like he did before, and then we'll nab him, too."

She cackled hideously as she talked about the revenge she would have on them both, and they agreed that when she got through with Dick there would be no need for them to do anything.

They put their heads together and considered Mother Dorkins's scheme for the kidnapping of the girl, and when they parted from the hag everything had been arranged to put the project into immediate execution.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK IN THE WATER STREET SALOON.

Dick liked his new position first rate.

He got very fair pay, and there was no friction between him and the head baggage master.

He was brought into contact with the general public now, and the necessity of being polite and obliging to everybody, including an endless variety of unreasonable male and female cranks, caused him to tone down his rough-and-ready ways.

Fortunately he was naturally of an even disposition, or he would have got into all kinds of hot water with the traveling public.

Trains were coming in and going out all day long and

well into the evening, and it was a case of hustle with them when the baggage trucks arrived on the train boats from New York, or from the platforms when the different trains came in.

One morning when Dick was having a breathing spell in the baggage-room a Western Union boy came to the railing and asked for Richard Osborn.

"That's my name," replied Dick, coming toward him.

"A telegram for you. Sign here," and the lad handed him his book.

"A telegram for me?" ejaculated the young baggage agent in surprise.

He took the yellow envelope and looked at it.

It was his name, plain enough, so he signed for it and the boy went away.

"I wonder who has sent me a message?" he asked himself, as he tore the end of the envelope open.

Taking out the blank he read as follows:

"Richard Osborn, Baggage-room, Erie RR. depot, Jersey City.

"Nellie gone again. Come over as soon as you can.

"CLARA LAWRENCE."

"Great Scott!" gasped Dick. "Can it be possible that old Mother Dorkins has turned up again and spirited Nellie away? Where in thunder has she been hiding that the police couldn't get a line on her? It is six months now since I rescued Nellie from her clutches, and though two detectives were looking for her some time, they failed to find her. The police were of the opinion that she had left the city. It is probable she did, and has now come back again. What a persistent old thing she is! If she has got Nellie again, and does her any harm, I believe I'll kill her the moment I run across her. She seems to be altogether too foxy for the police. Well, I'm off this evening after 7:30, and I'll run over to Mrs. Lawrence's house."

Dick worried about Nellie all the rest of the day.

He spoke to the baggage-master about her, telling him all about the girl's former connection with the old harridan, and how he saved her when the woman abducted her before.

"You'll have to put the police on to her again," replied the baggage-master. "They're bound to get her in the long run."

"But think what she may do to the girl in the meantime."

"I wouldn't worry if I were you, for it isn't at all certain that the old woman has got her. The telegram merely says she's gone again."

"I know that, but Mrs. Lawrence wouldn't have sent me that dispatch if she didn't feel pretty sure that Nellie has been captured by the hag again."

"Well, I suppose you'll call on her as soon as you get off this evening, then you'll learn all particulars."

"You bet I'll call, and I'll spend the whole night hunting for her if necessary," replied Dick, emphatically.

As soon as he was relieved from duty he ate a hurried supper and took the ferry-boat for the city.

Walking over to the City Hall elevated station he boarded a train for up-town.

Getting out at the 156th Street station, he made a bee-line for Eagle Avenue.

Reaching Mrs. Lawrence's house, he was admitted by the lady herself, who looked to be greatly troubled in mind.

"Oh, Dick, I haven't heard a word from Nellie since," she said, in an agitated voice. "I've notified the police, and a detective has been put on the case. The poor, dear girl! This is surely that villainous old woman's work."

"When did Nellie disappear?" asked Dick, anxiously.

"This morning. I sent her on an errand to my dress-maker in St. Ann's Avenue, and she hasn't been home since."

"I don't see how the old hag could get away with her in broad daylight."

"I can't understand it, either; but there is no doubt something has happened to her."

"There is no record, then, that she might have met with an accident in the street?"

"None. The fact would have become known at the police station before long. At any rate, I called up the two nearest hospitals on the 'phone, but no person corresponding to Nellie's description has been received at either today."

"Then Mother Dorkins must be at the bottom of her disappearance."

"I feel sure she is."

"I'll run down to the station and see if the police have heard anything about her," said Dick, grabbing his hat.

When Dick reached the station he could get no information about the girl.

He was told that the detective on the case had not made any report up to that hour.

At his earnest request the officer at the desk telephoned Police Headquarters.

The answer returned was that nothing was known about Nellie Hatton.

So Dick went away feeling greatly discouraged.

He was afraid the police were not exerting themselves very much on her behalf.

What to do himself he didn't know.

He didn't believe there was any use for him to go to the tenement where he found Nellie before, as he judged Mother Dorkins was too foxy to return there when she could find other cribs to keep under cover in.

As he couldn't keep still with Nellie's fate an uncertainty in his mind, he decided to go downtown and see what he could learn.

An hour later he was making inquiries in the tenement in the neighborhood of Grand Street.

No one appeared to know anything about Mother Dorkins until he struck the top floor, and then a tenant told him that he heard the woman had been seen hanging out at a low saloon on Water Street, the address of which he gave very clearly.

If Dick hadn't been so anxious about Nellie he might have suspected from this man's eagerness to direct him to the Water Street dive that there was something in the background.

The boy, however, didn't take notice of anything but the fact that he might get on the old woman's track by going to Water Street.

Had he been prudent he would have consulted a policeman on the subject.

This he did not do, but went straight to the address given him.

As a matter of fact, it was a case of "Walk into my par-

lor, said the spider to the fly," only in this instance there were two spiders waiting to welcome him.

The spiders in question were Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle.

The tenant had acted in their interest, and by their instructions, when he gave Dick the address of the Water Street saloon.

The young baggage agent didn't fancy the low groggery much when he arrived at the place, but as his heart and soul were wrapped up in Nellie's welfare, and as he was willing to dare any danger and take any risk in her behalf, he put on a bold front and entered the place, which was well filled with toughs, crooks and specimens of the slum dwellers, and redolent of the most villainous odors.

His generous nature got him into trouble on the very threshold of the saloon.

A vicious-looking old man was affording the assembled habitués much amusement by beating a crippled, half-clothed boy, and the lad's screams appealed irresistibly to Dick's sympathy.

The coat of veneer his rough-and-ready nature had been receiving ever since he first met Mrs. Lawrence slipped from him like a garment cast aside, and he jumped forward and smashed the old reprobate in the jaw with such force that the man measured his length on the floor.

"Leave that kid alone, blame you!" roared Dick, furiously.

A scene of considerable confusion ensued in the saloon.

Dark looks were turned on the visitor, and it could easily be seen that his interference was not relished by those present.

Dick didn't care a cent for the storm he had raised about his ears.

He was thoroughly aroused, and when he got going he meant business.

The vicious old man got on his feet, his mouth bleeding from the blow, and he looked ready to commit murder.

As soon as he sized Dick up as his assailant he yanked out an ugly-looking knife and prepared to spring on him.

Dick saw the action, and didn't wait for the scoundrel to begin operations.

He jumped forward and struck him another sledge-hammer clip in the face that sent the ruffian reeling against the bar.

He followed this up with a third jab that knocked the rascal stiff and motionless on the floor.

Then he picked up the knife and faced the crowd, who had observed his slugging abilities with no little astonishment.

The general impression began to prevail that he was a trained fighter, and no one cared to attack him, while not a few felt a strong admiration for his abilities.

The feeling against him changed and became about evenly divided.

"Bully for you, young feller," said an old tough. "Yer know how to handle yer mawleys. I'll back yer, blamed if I won't, if some gent present'll take off his coat and go a round or two with yer."

No one accepted this significant invitation.

The crippled boy lined up alongside Dick, and looked at him gratefully through his tear-dimmed eyes.

Dick took no notice of the tough's remark. but, walking up to the barkeeper, said:

"Do you know anything about an old woman named Mother Dorkins?"

"Mother Dorkins!" replied the man, looking keenly at Dick. "Youse kin find out somethin' about her in that room yonder."

"Is she there?"

"No, she ain't; but there's a chap playin' cards there wot knows all about her."

Dick started for the closed door of the room.

The little cripple hobbled quickly after him and caught him by the sleeve.

"Don't yer go in dere," he said earnestly.

"Why not?"

"Is yer name Dick Osborn?"

"Yes. How did you know that?" asked Dick, regarding him with great surprise.

"Because dere's two men in dere wot is waitin' for a feller about your age named Dick Osborn, who is expected to come here and ask for Mother Dorkins."

"The dickens, you say. Who are the men?"

"Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle."

The names afforded no information to Dick, but the fact that two men were waiting for him in the room was unpleasantly significant.

"Don't go in," pleaded the cripple. "Yer've done me a good turn and I won't see yer hurt if I kin help it—no, not if they kill me."

At that moment the door of the back room opened and two men appeared.

Dick recognized them at once as the express package thieves.

CHAPTER X.

CHRIS THE CRIPPLE.

Dick was a bit staggered when he saw who the men were.

Like a flash it occurred to him that they had learned it was he who had recovered the contents of the express package from them.

If that was a fact then the smaller of the two chaps, whom he had inadvertently knocked down the stairs of the tenement in the dark, knew who was his aggressor.

Under such circumstances it was easy for him to understand that the rascals were eager to get back at him.

Apparently they were also acquainted with his adventure with Mother Dorkins, and suspecting he might make some inquiries at the tenement about her, had got the top floor tenant to direct him to the Water Street saloon, where they expected to trap him.

All this passed through Dick's brain in the fraction of a moment as he faced the pair of rascals.

He would have walked right into their clutches if it hadn't been for the timely warning given him by the little cripple he had befriended at the risk of his life.

"We want to see you, young fellow," said Bunce, stepping forward.

"Well, you see me. What do you want?" replied Dick, retreating.

"Run for de door," said the cripple, in a low tone. "I'll block dem."

Dick was made of too plucky stuff to run in the face of danger, though such a course would have been very prudent under the circumstances.

"Get around behind him, Beagle," said Bunce. "He mustn't get away."

Beagle essayed a flank movement, but Dick headed him off.

"No, you don't, Mr. Beagle. If you come too close I'll put you to sleep so quick you'll think you've been hit by a cyclone," said Dick, warningly.

"Down him, boys!" shouted Bunce to the crowd.

About half of the crooks and toughs present began to close around Dick in a threatening way.

The boy saw his danger and with a leap sprang upon the bar.

"Git down off there, youse," cried the barkeeper, reaching for a club.

As he raised it to strike Dick the cripple darted with surprising quickness behind the bar and seized his arm.

"Let go, you little fool," cried the barkeeper.

"Naw, I won't! Yer sha'n't hit him," cried the boy with desperate earnestness.

"Then I'll kick yer in yer game leg, blame yer."

"I don't care if yer kill me. Yer sha'n't hit him."

At that moment Dick saw the butt of a heavy revolver sticking out from behind two whiskey bottles.

He reached down and secured it.

"Now, you loafers, come on," he shouted at the crowd.

Their desire to come on was suddenly dampened by the sight of the weapon.

Dick, seeing them fall back, swung around and kicked the club out of the barkeeper's hand, almost breaking his wrist.

With a howl of rage he picked up the nearest bottle and was in the act of throwing it at Dick when the cripple grabbed his arm again and the bottle fell to the floor with a crash.

"You little villain!" snarled the barkeeper. "I'll choke the life out of yer for that."

He grabbed the lad by the throat and proceeded to do him up.

Dick saw the brave little fellow's peril, but he dared not jump down to help him; for the moment his attention was off the crowd they would have closed in.

But he wasn't going to see the boy murdered before his eyes by a rascally brute and tough.

There was only one course open for him to prevent the possible tragedy, and that was to run the risk of killing his aggressor.

Under the desperate circumstances in which he and his little friend were placed he didn't care much what he did.

"Let go that boy, you scoundrel, or I'll put a ball into you," he shouted at the barkeeper.

The brute paid no attention to him.

The cripple was almost at his last gasp, and Dick saw it.

With a cry of anger he swung the revolver around and fired straight at the barkeeper's shoulder.

The fellow uttered a terrible cry as the ball entered his shoulder blade, and he released the cripple, who fell limply on the floor.

"I'm shot," howled the barkeeper, staggering out from behind the bar. "Get a doctor, or I'm done for."

Crack!

A revolver drawn by somebody in the crowd exploded and a bullet whizzed close by Dick's ear.

The young baggage agent whirled about, saw the rascal about to fire again and shot at him quicker than a wink.

He dropped like a stone, the ball stunning him above the ear.

The crowd, tough as it was, was aghast at Dick's expertness with the pistol.

Several revolvers which had been drawn were kept out of sight in fear of drawing Dick's fire.

The powder smoke mingled with the tobacco smoke in the dive, and through the misty atmosphere could be seen Dick's resolute, clear-cut countenance sweeping the crowd back and forth.

Like a tiger that has tasted blood, he was keyed up to the highest tension now.

The next time he fired it would probably be to kill, for the boy, understanding his desperate position, was reckless as to what he did now.

Bunce and his friend Beagle, who stood on the fringe of the crowd, were amazed at the nerve and pluck of the young baggage agent.

They had calculated on doing him up without any trouble, and without any assistance, whereas here he was, standing off a dozen as tough rascals as could be found anywhere along Water Street.

Probably Dick's fistie introduction, of which Bunce and Beagle were unaware, had something to do with the matter.

Half the bunch were more or less friendly to him now, and most of these were fellows who carried guns in their hip pockets.

Had they combined against the boy he would have been shot dead.

The barkeeper was lying moaning across one of the tables, bleeding from his wound, which was severe, but by no means fatal.

The man stunned by the second bullet had been carried to a corner and laid out under the impression that he was dead.

At this strenuous stage of the proceedings the little cripple recovered his faculties and shouted to Dick.

"Why don't yer make a break for de door? Now's yer chance."

"You go out first. I'm not going to leave you here to be killed."

"Don't yer mind me. I can't die more'n once."

"You sha'n't die on my account if I can help it. Get outside and skip, and do it quick."

The cripple, seeing that Dick meant what he said, hobbled around the crowd and darted into the street.

A crowd had already gathered outside, believing murder had been committed in the saloon, and the uproar was attracting a policeman to the spot.

At this point the proprietor entered through a rear door.

"Here, what does all this mean?" he demanded. "My barkeeper shot! Somebody get a cop to arrest that fellow on the bar," he added, seeing the revolver in Dick's hand and noting his aggressive attitude.

As soon as the cripple pushed his way through the crowd at the door Dick himself took a flying leap in the same

direction, flourishing the revolver to clear a path for himself.

Nobody tried to stop him and he reached the middle of the street, where he was joined by the crippled boy.

"Dere's a cop comin'," warned the cripple, "yer'd better run for it. I'll go erlong wit' youse-a way."

"We won't run, but we'll walk fast," said Dick, putting the weapon in his pocket; "then you can keep up with me."

"I'll show yer how yer kin give him de slip," said the lad.

He guided Dick into an alley, which communicated with a second, and so on to a third that let them out a block above.

"What's your name, sonny?" asked Dick.

"Me name is Chris the Cripple."

"What's your last name? Chris what?"

"I told youse it was Chris the Cripple."

"Haven't you got any other name?"

"Nope."

"You're an orphan, I suppose?"

"Dat's wot."

"Who was the man that was beating you?"

"Dat was Frenchy."

"Why did he beat you?"

"'Cause dat's de kind of feller he is. It wuz fun for him and de bunch."

"It wasn't any fun for you, though."

"Betcher life it wasn't. He hurt me somethin' awful. If it hadn't been for youse he might'r killed me. He wuz half shot and ugly 'nuff to do most anyt'in'."

"Where do you live, Chris?"

"Nowheres in partic'lar."

"Haven't you any home?"

"Nope. I hang out under de docks mostly wit' the Water Rats gang."

"Gee! I feel sorry for you, Chris."

"Do yer? Yer de fust feller dat ever told me dat. I never met nobody dat seemed to care a cent for me. De gang treats me well sometimes, and den ag'in dey make fun of me limp, and tumble me around. I have a tough time of it, and sometimes I wish I wuz dead."

"Look here, Chris, why don't you shake the gang and try to make an honest living for yourself selling papers or shining shoes?"

"I sell papers 'round de ferries. If I didn't do dat I'd starve."

"Do you know I like you, Chris, and I'd like to do something for you. I may have saved you from a bad beating, but you saved me from being done up, so I owe you a good deal."

"Youse don't owe me not'in'. Frenchy would have killed me ternight if youse hadn't chipped in and knocked him out. Youse kin use yer fists fust class. Are yer a prize-fighter?"

"No, Chris, nothing of the kind."

"Where did yer learn to slug, den?"

"Oh, I've taken lessons from a man who was a fighter."

"I'll bet youse could lick any feller in dat crowd, and some of dem fellers kin fight, for I've seen dem. Dey wuz afraid of yer, I could see dat. Dey took yer for a profesh, and didn't want no scrap wit' yer."

"Chris, do you want to quit Water Street and the docks and let me help you get up in the world?"

"Wot yer want to do for me?"

"I want you to come over to Jersey City and stop with me. I've got a good room and a big bed, and you're welcome to share it with me."

"Yer kiddin' me."

"No; I mean what I said."

"Wot could I do in Jersey City?"

"I'll set you up in the paper business near the station. I'm working for the Erie road. You could sell papers mornings and evenings, and perhaps I could find something else to occupy your spare time. Will you come?"

"Betcher life I will if yer mean it."

"All right. It's a bargain. I'll get you some decent clothes and whatever else you need. Stick by me and I'll make a man of you."

By that time they had reached the Fulton Street elevated station.

"I'm going to take you uptown first," continued Dick. "And that reminds me that I haven't told you the trouble I'm in."

"Wot! Are you in trouble?"

"Yes. A little girl I think the world of was kidnapped this morning by an old hag named Mother Dorkins, and it was to try and find the woman that brought me down to that Water Street saloon."

"Is dat so? I t'ought dem two men—Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle—had somebody send yer dere so dey could do yer up for a grudge dey owes yer."

"A man did send me to the saloon for that purpose, but—however, come upstairs, I'll tell you the whole story on the train."

They reached the platform in time to catch a through train north, and took their seats at the end of the last car in order to escape observation.

As soon as the train got under way Dick began the story of Nellie's troubles and experiences with Mother Dorkins, and his own connection therewith, and the little cripple listened with eager attention.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK AT THE TOMBS POLICE COURT.

By the time the train reached 156th Street Dick had finished his story, and he led Chris the Cripple out of the car, down the stairs and up to Eagle Avenue to the home of Mrs. Lawrence.

"Have you any news of the dear child?" asked the lady, tremulously, when she admitted Dick and his seedy-looking companion.

"I'm sorry to say that I haven't. But I've just been through a pretty tough adventure myself, which is bound to lead to my arrest," replied Dick.

"Your arrest!"

"Yes. I was compelled to shoot two men in self-defense in a Water Street saloon, where I went on a false clue after Mother Dorkins."

"My gracious, Dick, how did it happen?"

"I'll tell you, but first let me introduce a new friend of mine, Chris the Cripple, a wharf rat, as they are called, who saved me from being done up by two rascals who owe me a grudge in connection with that express parcel robbery of

six months ago. I've taken Chris under my wing, and he's going to Jersey City with me."

Mrs. Lawrence regarded the lame boy with some curiosity.

Dick then told her all about his movements since leaving her early that evening, with a graphic description of his strenuous experience in the dive.

"The police are no doubt looking for me, and it is my duty to give myself up, but I guess I won't do that to-night, as I don't care to roost in a cell if I can help myself. You must get your friend, Mr. Winthrop, the leader of this district, to stand by me. When the judge has heard my story, corroborated by Chris, and considers the tough element I was up against, I hope he will regard my action as justifiable."

"I will do all I can for you, Dick. I will call on Mr. Winthrop first thing in the morning, and I will telephone you at the railroad station what he advises you to do."

"All right. I have done all I can to-night to find Mother Dorkins. I haven't the least idea where to look for her now, so it would be useless for me to wander around the slums on a wild-goose chase, which might only land me in the soup without benefiting Nellie in the least. You must get Mr. Winthrop to stir the police up in her behalf. Whatever Nellie suffers through her present kidnapping shall be repaid to that old hag a hundredfold if I get my hands on her. I'm afraid I won't leave enough of her to be sent to jail."

It was after one in the morning when Dick and the boy left Mrs. Lawrence's home and took a train for the Chambers Street ferry via the Battery.

They reached Jersey City at half-past two, and fifteen minutes later were in Dick's room, where they turned into bed without any loss of time.

In the morning Dick took Chris to the restaurant where he was a regular customer, and they breakfasted together.

Chris declared that he hadn't enjoyed such a sumptuous meal in all his life, though it only consisted of steak, fried potatoes, coffee and rolls.

On his way to the station Dick took Chris into a furnishing store and treated him to a new suit, hat, shoes, two suits of underwear and two shirts, with socks and other indispensable adjuncts.

"Now, Chris, I'll have these things sent to my room for you. In the meanwhile I want you to return to your old haunts in New York and do a little detective work for me. Try and find out where Mother Dorkins is hiding. Here is a dollar to pay your expenses. If you should hit on a clue come right over and report to me in the baggage-room. I'll show you where it is. If you don't discover anything get back here by dark and come to the baggage-room just the same. I'll be on the lookout for you. You'll do this for me, won't you?"

"Will I? Will a duck swim? I'll do anythin' for youse, make yer mind easy on dat. I'm yer friend as long as I live, bet yer boots," said Chris, emphatically.

"You're a trump, Chris. Remember, it's for Nellie Hatton's sake that you're working, and she is the same to me as a sister."

"Right yer are. I'll find dat old harridan if it's possible for me to do it. If I can't, youse won't blame me, will yer?"

"Certainly not, Chris. I know you'll do all you can, and I don't expect impossibilities of you."

Dick took Chris to the baggage-room, and after some further instructions dismissed him with the injunction to be careful and not to get into trouble.

About ten o'clock Dick was called to the 'phone.

The voice at the other end of the wire was a man's.

He said he was Mr. Winthrop.

He told the boy to come to the Tombs Police Court at two o'clock, where he and Mrs. Lawrence would meet him.

He was to surrender himself for examination before the magistrate.

"Bring the crippled boy with you as a corroborative witness."

"I won't be able to, as I sent him to the slums to hunt for Mother Dorkins, and I don't expect to see him before dark," replied Dick.

"I'm sorry for that, as his evidence is what you need to get you off easily. However, I'll see what can be done without him. The police have arrested half the people found at the Water Street saloon, and have also taken the two men you shot, and a fellow named Frenchy, into custody. I will telephone the magistrate that I will have you in court at two. One of my lieutenants is now down at the Tombs pumping the prisoners to see what they are likely to say against you. They will probably have the captain of their district there to help them out, and I shall have a talk with him. I hope to square matters for you. You will plead self-defense, of course, and the character of the prisoners is against them, as well as the reputation of the saloon where the trouble occurred. We will also have a lawyer to help you out. That is all. Good-by."

Dick told the baggage-master that he would have to go to the Tombs Police Court at two o'clock, and explained the reason therefor.

"I suppose you'll have to go, young man. I'll manage to get along somehow until you get back. I hope you won't be detained by the authorities," said his superior.

"I hope not, too. I wish I hadn't sent my witness to the city. He would be of great help to me at the examination."

"You ought to have held on to him."

"I know it, but I'm so worried over the fate of that girl Nellie that I sent him to try and find a clue to the whereabouts of the old woman who we are positive has got her. He knows every nook and corner of the slums, and, being recognized as a slum bird himself, he can go around with perfect safety in places where it would be dangerous for even a detective to penetrate," said Dick.

At two o'clock Dick walked into the court.

He saw Mrs. Lawrence sitting with a well-dressed, fine-looking gentleman.

He went up to the seat.

"You're on time, Dick," said the lady. "Mr. Winthrop, this is Richard Osborn."

The gentleman bowed slightly and shook hands with Dick.

"I'll take you to the bar and you can surrender yourself," said Winthrop.

At that moment Dick felt a touch on his arm.

Turning around he was surprised to see Chris the Cripple standing there.

"By George, Chris, I'm glad you've come," he said. "How did you know I was here?"

"De baggage man at de station told me yer wuz here. He asked me if I wuz yer witness, and when I said I was he chased me over here in a hurry," replied the lame boy.

"Mr. Winthrop," said Dick, "this is the witness I spoke to you about. He will back up everything I shall say."

"It is fortunate he turned up, though I have things pretty well arranged so there is little doubt but you'll be discharged. I've spoken to the magistrate, and I've fixed things with the captain of the district, who is here to help out the other side. Your witness, however, will make things easy for us."

Dick was surrendered to the authorities as the person responsible for the shooting in the Water Street saloon.

The case was called right away to oblige Mr. Winthrop, who evidently had a big political pull.

The complainant was the proprietor of the dive.

He was put on the stand first, and told what little he had seen.

The barkeeper followed him, and declared Dick had shot him in the back without provocation.

The other man, who was shot in the head, which was bound up, was an unwilling witness, as he knew he had drawn the shot by firing first.

He wouldn't have appeared in court if he could have helped himself, and didn't want to go on the stand against Dick, but the judge compelled him to do so.

Several of the toughs testified against Dick with respect to his shooting of the barkeeper, but they were singularly ignorant about the shooting of the other man.

Dick was then called in his own defense.

He stated that his name was Richard Osborn, and that he was assistant to the baggage-master at the Erie station in Jersey City.

His appearance and frank manner contrasted favorably with those against him.

He began his story with the receipt of the telegram in the baggage-room from Mrs. Lawrence, informing him of the second disappearance of Nellie Hatton.

He said he came to New York as soon as he was off duty and called on the lady at her home in Eagle Avenue.

After learning the particulars of the girl's disappearance he went to the 36th Precinct Station to ask if any news had been heard about the case.

Learning that the police had no information to give out, he went down town to the tenement on ——— Street, where he had rescued Nellie from Mother Dorkins' hands before, for the purpose of making inquiries about the whereabouts of the old woman.

A tenant directed him to the Water Street saloon, and that was why he went there.

He described how he had interfered to save Chris the Cripple from a terrible beating at the hands of the man Frenchy, who he, said, was in court.

At the request of the lawyer engaged by Mrs. Lawrence he pointed the ruffian out.

Then he stated how he had asked the barkeeper about Mother Dorkins and he had referred him to a man in a room at the back; how Chris the Cripple had warned him not to go into the room, and how two men, whom he recognized as the thieves who had stolen an express package from

him when he was working for Terrance O'Grady, a Bronx expressman, had come out and called on the crowd to down him.

The rest of his story was a graphic description of the scrap in the saloon, during which he had shot the barkeeper to save the cripple from being choked to death, and the other man to save his own life.

The lawyer asked him many questions, the answers to which strengthened his story.

Chris the Cripple was put on the stand and corroborated Dick in every detail.

Mrs. Lawrence testified to the correctness of the first part of Dick's story and to his good character.

Mr. O'Grady also testified in Dick's favor.

The lawyer then asked for the young baggage agent's discharge, and the magistrate consented to let him go.

The barkeeper, Frenchy and the tough who had fired at Dick were held to await the action of the Grand Jury, and the others were discharged.

The magistrate then issued warrants for the arrest of Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle, and that ended the examination.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RECOVERY OF NELLIE.

Mr. Winthrop hurried away as soon as the case had been satisfactorily finished, leaving Mrs. Lawrence, Dick and Chris the Cripple together.

"Have you learned anything about Mother Dorkins, Chris?" asked Dick, eagerly, for the lame boy's unexpected return before dark indicated that he had news.

"Yep. She's goin' to leave town ternight over de Erie wit' de gal, Nellie," replied the boy.

"The dickens she is," cried Dick, excitedly. "Did you learn what train she's going to take?"

"De 7:30 t'rough for Chicago."

"Good," cried Dick. "I'll notify the police to be on hand. We'll have her, and Nellie will be saved. Chris, you're a jewel. How did you find this out?"

The boy said he had learned it through a conversation he had overheard between Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle in a certain saloon.

"Can you put the police on to those rascals? The magistrate has ordered their arrest."

"Dunno. Dey left de saloon jest before I did, and I dunno where dey went."

"You can tell the magistrate where you saw them, at any rate."

"I'll do dat."

"You didn't learn where the old woman is hiding, did you?"

"Nope."

"Well, it doesn't matter. It is three now. We'll nail her in a few hours in Jersey City on her way to the train."

Dick told Mrs. Lawrence to be at the baggage-room in the station at seven to take charge of Nellie, and then, after Chris had informed the magistrate where he had seen Bunce and Beagle, he and the lame boy started for Jersey City.

Mrs. Lawrence went to Police Headquarters and told the superintendent that Mother Dorkins was going to take the

7:30 P. M. train West that day, with the kidnapped girl, and requested that he ask the Jersey City police to capture them at the station.

He agreed, and telephoned the request over at once.

He was told that a couple of detectives would be on hand to catch the old hag.

A description of Mother Dorkins and Nellie was forwarded for their guidance, and they were told to get Chris the Cripple, who could be found at the baggage-room, to help them identify the woman.

The detectives called at the baggage-room at six o'clock and saw Dick and the lame boy.

They promised to be back at a quarter of seven.

Promptly on time they were back and Chris went off with them.

From that time on Dick was in a fever of excitement.

At six minutes of seven Chris rushed into the baggage-room and told Dick that the old woman had been caught.

"And Nellie?"

"She isn't wit' her."

"She isn't with her?" gasped Dick.

"Nope. And she swears she don't know not'in' about de gal. She says her arrest is an outrage, and dat she didn't kidnap de gal."

"Good Lord!" cried Dick. "Maybe Nellie is goin' in charge of somebody else. That old woman is as foxy as the old scratch. In case the police got on to her she made sure that Nellie wouldn't be found with her, so she couldn't be held on the charge of kidnapping. What are we going to do?"

"Dunno, boss," replied the cripple, scratching his head.

"Where are the detectives?"

"Dey're gone to de station wit' Mudder Dorkins."

Dick rushed into the baggage-room to tell Mrs. Lawrence, who had come over on time, about the unfortunate state of affairs.

The good lady was almost prostrated at the possibility of losing Nellie after all.

She had confidently counted on having the girl in her arms in a few minutes.

"What are we to do?" she asked.

"You must go to Police Headquarters here, tell the chief how things stand, and that you believe Nellie is being sent on this train in charge of other persons. This is the Chicago Express and the first stop will be made at P——. Tell the chief to telegraph to the police of that town to board the train at that place and go through the cars. Give him Nellie's description. She may be under the influence of some drug and represented as ill. It is possible she'll be carried in a sleeper. Rush, now, for you have no time to lose."

Dick almost pushed Mrs. Lawrence out of the baggage-room, and the lady hurried away.

At that moment the train boat from New York pulled in, having the baggage, mail and last batch of passengers aboard for the 7:30 express.

The baggage trucks began to come into the station en route for the platform.

All were loaded, the last one particularly so.

A trunk on the top of it looked so wobbly that Dick called the attention of the man wheeling it to the fact.

"Look out. Go carefully, or the trunk will take a tumble," he said.

As he spoke the baggage truck bumped against a heavy box that lay in the way.

The top trunk fell with a crash, the cover burst open, and a lovely girl was revealed, bound and gagged, inside.

"Great Scott! What's this?" cried Dick, aghast at the discovery, while the spectators looked on with amazement.

"It's de gal. It's de gal!" shouted Chris the Cripple, who had a better view of the unfortunate girl than Dick.

The boy had never seen Nellie before, but he instinctively recognized her from Dick's description.

"What, Nellie!" cried Dick, springing forward.

"Yep."

Then Dick saw the features plainly of his adopted sister, and bending down he raised her out of the trunk.

"My heavens! I fear she's dead!" he ejaculated, as he saw how pale and inert the girl was.

Her eyes were closed and she did not appear to breathe at all.

The frenzied boy tore the gag from her mouth and placed his ear against the region of the heart.

He could hear it beating faintly.

"Quick, Chris, go to the baggage-master and get him to telephone for a doctor. Tell him it's urgent," he said.

He put his hand in his pocket, drew out his knife and cut the cords that held Nellie's arms.

Then he carried her into the baggage-room, where he found the baggage-master telephoning for a physician.

"Will you telephone Police Headquarters that Nellie Hatton has been found?" asked Dick.

"Certainly," replied his superior, and he did.

"She must have been knocked insensible by the fall of the trunk," said Dick, regarding Nellie with an anxious look.

The baggage-master examined the girl closely.

"Possibly," he replied; "or else she is unconscious through lack of air. Where is the trunk she came in?"

"Outside. I'll fetch it in."

Dick brought the trunk into the baggage-room, together with the bunch of old garments that had been used to hold Nellie in one position.

On examining it they saw it was punctured all over to admit air to the prisoner, and some of the holes were of good size.

"She had air enough," said the baggage-master. "I guess the shock of falling must have stunned her."

In fifteen minutes a doctor appeared and looked at the girl.

"She's drugged with chloral," he said, "that's what's the matter with her. It will be some hours before she recovers her senses."

"Is she injured in any way? She had a bad fall," and Dick told the physician the circumstances of the case.

"No," replied the doctor, "not that I can see. Has she friends here?"

"A lady will be here in a few minutes to take charge of her."

As he spoke Mrs. Lawrence entered the baggage-room.

She rushed to Nellie at once.

"Don't tell me she is dead," cried the lady, tearfully.

The doctor explained the girl's condition to her.

"She had better be taken to a hospital," he said. "The drug may make her very ill if the dose was not a small one."

Accordingly, an ambulance was summoned and Nellie was carried to the nearest hospital, and Mrs. Lawrence followed after her.

"Thank heaven we've got her away from that old schemer," said Dick, fervently, satisfied that his adopted sister would be all right again in a day or two. "Chris, I sha'n't forget what I owe you, for if you hadn't found out about Mother Dorkins going West by the express to-night, and the trunk hadn't fallen from the trucks, we'd probably never have seen Nellie again."

"Dat's all right, boss. Glad to do anyt'in' for youse and de gal," answered the crippled lad, and then they clasped hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK BECOMES AN EXPRESS AGENT.

Next morning Dick staked Chris in the paper selling business, and the lame boy took up his stand near the station.

He was dressed in his old outer garments, as he claimed he would do a better trade if people thought he was a poor cripple, dependent on selling his papers for a living.

Nellie left the hospital fully recovered that afternoon, and greatly rejoiced to find herself once more under Mrs. Lawrence's wing, whom she dearly loved.

She had a great deal to tell.

Her kidnapping was accomplished by Mother Dorkins with the assistance of Bill Beagle and Bunce Oliver and a cab.

This time she did not receive a beating, but the hag told her that was a satisfaction she was holding back until her associates had captured Dick Osborn, then she intended to have Dick as a witness to the beatings she meant to give the girl.

She knew that would make the boy suffer a great deal.

What she proposed to do to Dick she didn't tell Nellie, but she intimated that when she got through with him he wouldn't amount to much.

Mrs. Lawrence and Nellie stopped at the baggage-room before crossing the river, and Dick and his adopted sister had a very affectionate little interview.

It was necessary to serve a requisition on the New Jersey authorities before Mother Dorkins could be brought to New York, as she refused to come voluntarily.

This took a little time, but the old hag was finally landed in the Tombs.

She waived examination and was held for the Grand Jury, which in due time returned an indictment against her on which she was subsequently tried, convicted and received fifteen years.

Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle succeeded in eluding the New York police, and escaped arrest.

After a sharp hunt by several detectives had failed to locate them, it was assumed they had left, which in point of fact they had the moment they heard of Mother Dorkins' arrest at the Erie station.

With the old hag in jail, Dick, Nellie and Mrs. Lawrence breathed easier.

About the time that Mother Dorkins was carried to the

State prison for women up-State, Dick heard that the position of express agent at a town on the Erie would soon be vacant.

He put in an application for the place with the express company, referring to his record as assistant baggage agent with the Erie road.

He backed his application up with a letter from Mr. Winthrop, and at the end of fifteen days was called to the office of the general superintendent in New York.

On presenting himself the superintendent sized him up, and being satisfied with his personal appearance, questioned him as to his qualifications for the position.

The only drawback was lack of experience in a similar position.

The superintendent finally waived this and gave him the appointment, to take effect on the first of the next month.

He was directed to report at once to the present incumbent, who received instructions to break him in.

The town of B——, which was to be the scene of his new activities, was about forty miles from Jersey City.

It was a hustling place, and the express company did a great deal of business there.

Dick had been informed by the general superintendent that if he made a good record there he would in time be promoted to a more responsible position in the company's employ.

Chris the Cripple declared vehemently that he was going to P—— with Dick, to whom he was greatly attached.

"If yer don't take me I'll walk," he said.

"I'll be glad to take you, Chris, and I dare say I'll be able to find some light work for you to do. In fact, as my pay will be pretty fair I can afford to make you a kind of general assistant to me, if you're willing to accept small wages."

"I'll work for youse for me board and clothes," replied the lame boy.

"You shall have that, and spending money to boot."

"Dat suits me from de ground floor up, betcher life," replied Chris, in a tone of intense satisfaction. "As long as I'm wit' youse I'm satisfied."

So one afternoon Dick called at Mrs. Lawrence's house to bid her and his adopted sister good-by.

Nellie was broken-hearted at the idea of Dick going so far away, where he couldn't visit her two and three times a week as he had been in the habit of doing.

"Never mind, dear, we'll write twice a week to each other, and maybe Mrs. Lawrence will bring you out to see me once in awhile," said Dick.

"But that isn't like seeing you twice a week," replied Nellie, tearfully, as she clung around his neck.

"Do you think so much of me that you hate to let me go?" he asked.

"You know I do."

"Do you like me better than anyone else in the world, even Mrs. Lawrence, who is so good to you?"

"Yes, yes."

"Would you like to be something nearer than a sister to me one of these days?"

"Oh, Dick," she cried, burying her head on his shoulder.

"Well, I intend to marry you some time when I get on in the world if you will have me. Do you think you care enough for me to marry me?"

"Do you really like me enough for that, Dick?"

"I do. I love you very dearly."

"And I love you with all my heart," she said, kissing him.

"Then we will consider ourselves engaged. You can tell Mrs. Lawrence about it after I have gone, and I guess she will say it's all right."

Dick remained to dinner and then took a fond leave of his little sweetheart, who cried a good deal, and of Mrs. Lawrence.

That good lady did not need to be told that Dick and Nellie had made up their minds to marry some time in the future, for she had long since discounted that on seeing how devoted they were to each other.

That night Dick and Chris the Cripple boarded a late train that stopped at B——, and were met at the station by Ben Burton, the retiring express agent.

He was surprised to see that his successor was accompanied by a companion; but Dick explained that the lame boy was his devoted adherent, and went everywhere that he did.

"The company won't object to him helping me around the office here as long as it doesn't cost the corporation anything," said Dick.

"I guess you needn't worry about that," laughed Burton. "You can hire as many assistants as you think you want, as long as you pay them out of your own pocket."

Burton took Dick and his lame friend to the lodgings near the station he had secured for his successor, and Dick made arrangements with the landlady for Chris to stop with him.

The boys were to board as well as lodge with her, and they took possession of the room at once.

"Report at the office at the station in the morning," said Burton, "and I will begin showing you the ropes."

"All right," answered Dick, and Burton bade them good-night.

He and Chris appeared promptly on time, and while the lame boy hung around and amused himself as best he could, Dick took hold and gave his attention strictly to business.

By the end of the week Dick was fully capable of taking charge of the office, and the first coming around a few days later, Burton bade him good-by for good and left the town, while Dick began his career as a young express agent.

CHAPTER XIV.

BUNCE AND BEAGLE TURN UP AGAIN.

Dick soon found that Chris was a great help to him.

The lame boy could hop around in as lively a fashion as though he did not have a game leg, and he was keen-sighted and correct in picking out packages and boxes when called upon to do so.

During his first few days' service Dick had an extra large amount of express business to handle, and the way he put it through was a caution.

He was striving for a record so as to make a good impression at the home office, for he knew that being a new man he would be watched, especially as the station was an important one, and kicks were sure to develop if things didn't go right.

The station agent, with whom both he and Chris got

friendly at once, complimented Dick on the way he made things hum.

"You're a whole lot smarter than Burton, though, of course, you have an advantage over him by having a helper. That lame boy is as spry as most boys with two good legs. Where did you pick him up?" asked the station agent.

"On the wharves of New York. He's tough, but he's all right. I brought him down here because he wouldn't give me the shake. I'll tell you some time how we met. It was under strenuous circumstances in a low New York saloon. I saved his life and he saved mine, so you see the bond between us is one of gratitude."

"He isn't on the company's books, is he?"

"No. I pay him out of my pocket. He'd work for his bare keep sooner than not be with me," replied Dick.

On Saturday afternoon Chris noticed two men hanging around the station and the freight cars.

He called Dick's attention to the fact, and Dick mentioned the matter to the station agent.

"I guess they're calculating on stealing a ride to-night on the freight," said the agent. "I'll keep my eye on them, and tell the train crew to watch out for them."

Dick was getting ready to close his office about seven, when Chris, who had been out of sight for nearly an hour, and Dick had been wondering where he was, came in.

"Say, Dick, I've been shadderin' dem blokes, and who do yer s'pose dey are?" he said, animatedly.

"Who are you talking about?" replied the young express agent.

"Why, de two chaps wot's been hangin' 'round most of de afternoon."

"Oh, you mean the men the station agent thinks are going to steal a ride to-night."

"Dey ain't lookin' to steal no ride. Dey're lookin' to do youse up."

"Do me up?" exclaimed Dick, in some surprise.

"Dat's wot. Who do yer s'pose dey are?"

"How should I know?"

"Den I'll tell yer. Dey are Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle."

"Get out. You're dreaming."

"Now, I'm not dreamin'," replied Chris, with a sagacious wag of his head. "I follered dem to dat bunch of woods down de track, and got close enough to hear wot dey wuz talkin' about. Dey've got false whiskers and beards on. Dey wuz much surprised to see youse and me down here. Dey want to get square wit' yer for all yer did to dem."

"Oh, they do? How are they goin' to do it?"

"Dey're goin' to foller yer home ternight and see where yer live. Dat's de fust t'ing dey're goin' to do."

"What good will that do them?"

"Dey're goin' to watch 'round and see if yer go out after-cards."

"Then they expect to jump me, I suppose?"

"Yep; and carry yer off somewhere dat dey kin have full swing wit' yer."

"A nice little program. I guess I'll put a spoke in their calculations by notifying the police about them."

"Dat's right. Dey're wanted in Noo York for kidnappin' yer gal, and I guess dey'll get as much as Mudder Dorkins wuz soaked for."

"They deserve it."

"Betcher life dey do. Dey ought to get twenty."

"I'm ready to shut up now. Take a squint outside and see where they are."

Chris limped out on the platform and took a careless survey of the neighborhood.

He saw Bunce and Beagle leaning against a fence on the other side of the railroad.

He reported the fact to Dick when the young express agent came out and turned the key in the door of his office.

"Well, keep them in sight as we go along," he said, and Chris said he would.

As soon as Dick and Chris started up the street toward their boarding place Bunce and Beagle sauntered carelessly after them.

The young agent and his assistant lived only a block and a half from the station, and the two rascals saw them enter a three-story cottage.

"That's where they hang out," said Bunce to his companion. "Now that we've got 'em spotted we ought to be able to catch Osborn without any great trouble."

"We've got to take him off his guard," said Beagle. "He's a slugger, you know. The chaps on Water Street took him for a professional fighter from the way he sailed into Frenchy that night. He's got a lot of sand. Look how he stood that crowd off. And he can shoot some when driven into a corner."

"Never mind what he can do when he gets the chance. We must not give him any chance to come back at us. A tap on the block with a slung shot ought to knock all the fight out of him. This is a quiet locality at night, and that's all in our favor. Once we get him in our power we'll fix him for keeps."

"I'd like to know how it is that Chris the Cripple is down here with him."

"What difference does it make? If he should be along with Osborn he'll get a tap, too, that'll put him to sleep long enough to prevent him from makin' any trouble for us," replied Bunce.

"I'll attend to him," said Beagle. "But s'pose Osborn doesn't come out to-night?"

"What's the matter with us goin' to the door and askin' for him?"

"He might recognize us."

"Not much danger of that with our beards."

"It won't do to jump on him at the house. The racket would be sure to attract attention. We must get some kid around here to go and tell him that the station agent wants to see him. Then we can down him on his way there."

"That's a good idea. We'll do that if he doesn't come out in a reasonable time."

While they were fixing up their plot outside, Dick and Chris were at the supper table doing justice to the boarding missus' bill of fare, which was plain but substantial.

After leaving the table they went up to their room.

"I guess you'd better go to the police station, Chris, and notify the authorities that the two crooks, wanted in New York, are hanging around this neighborhood. It isn't likely that the rascals will hold you up as they are only after me. After you are gone I'll make a bluff to go out, and that will hold them if they are watching the house."

"All right, boss; I'll do it."

Accordingly Chris put on his hat and departed.

Ten minutes afterward Dick appeared at the front door with his hat, apparently in the act of going out alone.

The two rascals saw him.

"He's comin' out at last," said Bunce. "The street is as silent and deserted as a churchyard. We'll get him."

Dick, however, began feeling his pockets as if in search of something, and then turned around and re-entered the house.

"He's forgot somethin'," said Beagle. "He'll be out in a few minutes. Let's cross over and be ready to down him when he strikes the walk."

The pair at once crossed over and hid behind the trunk of a big shade tree large enough to screen their bodies.

Dick had been watching through a crack in the door and saw them.

"Gee! They think they've got me dead," he chuckled. "I'll go out by the rear way, come around and watch them myself. If Chris only brings a couple of officers with him we'll be able to nab the rascals. I'll head off one of them at any rate."

So Dick left the house by the back door, crossed a plot of vacant ground, walked around the short block, and hid himself behind a fence not far in the rear of Bunce and Beagle, whose attention was centered on the stoop of the house where Dick lived.

CHAPTER XV.

BUNCE AND BEAGLE FAIL TO SPRING THEIR TRAP.

The two rascals watched the house for fifteen minutes and then their patience began to give out.

And while they waited and fumed at the delay the object of their attention was only a few yards in their rear, on the other side of the street, watching them as sharply as they were watching for him.

By and by Chris came limping leisurely down the street. Bunce and Beagle saw him, and so did Dick.

"Here comes the cripple back," said Bunce. "I've a great mind to give him a knock on the head to square up old scores. If it hadn't been for him we'd have had things our way at the saloon that night, and then other matters might have turned out differently."

"You grab him and I'll choke the senses out of him. We can do it in a minute, and then we'll chuck him into the bushes," replied Beagle.

Chris had no suspicions that the two rascals were so near, and walked along carelessly and somewhat off his guard.

He had brought two policemen as far as a block above, where it was agreed that one of them was to go around the block while the other slowly followed Chris at a distance.

When Chris was about to turn in at the gate, Bunce and Beagle sprang at him from behind the tree, and only by a quick duck the boy escaped a blow from the former's fist.

The next instant Beagle had his fingers about the lame boy's throat.

Chris tried to shout for help, but the sound died away in his throat.

Dick saw what was happening and dashed across the street to his assistance.

Before either rascal was aware of his presence he was upon them, dealing out his sledge-hammer blows.

Bunce went down in a heap and Beagle had to let go of Chris to defend himself.

"You rascal, I know you," cried Dick, landing a blow on Beagle's neck that staggered him.

The fellow was a very poor fighter when up against a person who knew how to hit out in a skilful way.

The third blow knocked all the sand out of him and he took to his heels just as his companion recovered from his temporary knockout.

Bunce was no coward.

He saw that Dick was alone, and he went for him, hoping to do him up by main strength.

Dick was too slick and active for him, however, and stood him off.

The policeman up the street saw the scrap and started on the run toward the scene.

Bunce saw him coming and with an exclamation of baffled rage he, too, started after his companion.

Dick didn't follow him, thinking it was useless, and not aware that there was a policeman coming down the ~~cross~~ street below.

He turned to see how badly hurt Chris was.

Bunce reached the corner at the same moment that the policeman turned it.

They collided with considerable force and went down on the walk.

Bunce recovered first, drew his slung-shot and stunned the officer with it, then he disappeared in the direction of the station.

"I'll be all right in a minute," said Chris, getting up with Dick's help. "Dat rooster had a strong grip on me windpipe, and I t'ought I wuz a goner. It's lucky youse came out and tackled dem."

"I didn't come out. I was out already watching them from across the street when they attacked you."

"Is dat so? It's too bad dey got away so soon. I brought a couple of cops wit' me. One is comin' down the street while de udder went around de block."

At that moment the cop who had seen the row came up on a run.

"Hello," said Chris, "youse is too late to catch dem blokes. They jumped me at dis here gate, and if it wuzn't dat me friend wuz on hand I'd been laid out for fair."

"I guess we'd better follow them," said Dick. "They can't be very well acquainted with the neighborhood, and we may be able to round them up."

As the officer had been sent expressly to help catch the two men he started down the street, followed by Dick and Chris.

At the corner they found the other policeman lying half stunned on the walk.

They brought him around and he explained how he had been knocked out.

The whole party then started for the station, where they expected to find the crooks trying to hide themselves behind the string of freight cars.

What with the darkness and the uncertainty as to the whereabouts of the two rascals, they failed to get any trace of them, so they finally had to give the search up as a bad job.

The officers returned to the police station to report non-

success, while Dick and Chris returned to their boarding-house and went to bed.

Next day Chris kept on the lookout for any indication of the presence of Bunce and Beagle in that neighborhood, but there were no signs of them.

During a lull in his labors that afternoon he wrote a letter to Nellie telling her about the run-in he and Chris had had with Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle.

He wound up by telling her how much he missed her, and enclosed a hundred kisses to duplicate the hundred she had sent him in her recent letter.

At the end of the month Dick received his pay, and was pleased to believe that he had acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the general superintendent.

Six months passed away and Dick was not molested by a visit from the two crooks, who evidently thought it was too risky to fool with him.

Sunday, of course, was a day of rest for Dick and Chris, though the lame boy was not obliged to exert himself week days if he didn't want to.

Dick always wrote a long letter to his sweetheart that day, while Chris devoted himself to the studies his friend was coaching him in.

If the afternoon was fine they walked out together.

One Sunday they took a stroll out into the country beyond the railroad.

Chris's lame leg didn't prevent him from going as far as Dick cared to go, and so they extended their tramp some distance that afternoon.

In fact, Dick went further than he intended, and had just woke up to that fact when Chris called his attention to an old deserted looking residence up a short lane.

"Let's go dere and take a look at dat place," said the lame boy.

"All right. If you want to get a near view so bad I'll go with you."

They walked up the lane, and went around to the rear after trying the front door and finding it locked.

The kitchen door showed signs of having been forced.

At any rate, the lock was broken and there was nothing to prevent them walking inside, which they did.

The empty rooms on the ground floor echoed their tread, and they went over them all—kitchen, dining-room, sitting-room and a big room that had been presumedly the parlor.

There was nothing but dust and dirt, and a few cobwebs.

They ascended the wide staircase to the second floor, and here they found four large chambers, also as bare as a billiard ball.

Another flight pointed the way to the third story.

They found two finished rooms on the top floor and an unfinished attic.

In the latter they found evidences of recent occupancy by men who appeared to belong to the order of hobbs.

While they were examining the attic footsteps sounded below, then on the stairs as though two persons were coming up.

"I'll bet it's the tramps coming back for the night," said Dick.

"Let dem come. Dey ain't got no more right here dan we have," replied Chris.

"They might act ugly when they see us in the room they have appropriated."

"Do youse see dis?" said the lame boy, pulling out the slung-shot that Beagle had dropped the night he and his pal attacked Chris, and which the lad had found. "If dey try any monkey business wit' us dere'll be somet'in' doin', betcher life."

At that moment the footsteps approached the door which opened and admitted—Bunce Oliver and Bill Beagle, looking as if they had been up against very hard luck since the boys saw them last.

CHAPTER XVI.

A YOUNG EXPRESS AGENT'S LUCK.

It would be hard to say which party was most surprised—Bunce and Beagle or Dick and Chris.

For a moment or two neither made a move, but regarded each other in a wary way as if calculating what move the other would make.

"So, we've got you at last, my young express agent," said Bunce, with a wicked grin, as it struck him that he and Beagle had the plucky boy at a disadvantage.

"I don't know that you have," replied Dick, shortly. "Maybe we've got you."

Bunce laughed sardonically.

"We owe you a long-standin' grudge, and the present opportunity is a good one to square old scores," he said.

"You're down on me because I queered your crooked work. You'll be down on me worse after I've landed you both in jail," returned Dick.

"You'll never do that, young fellow. You helped send Mother Dorkins up, but that's as far as you'll ever get with any one else."

"Don't be too sure of that. How do you know but we've traced you to this house and have several cops below ready to pounce on you when we give the word?"

Bunce and Beagle exchanged uneasy glances.

It was quite possible that Dick spoke the truth.

In that case they were trapped.

"We'll never be taken alive," hissed Bunce, drawing a revolver.

Chris, who was watching every move of the rascals, saw Bunce put his hand to his hip pocket.

He knew what was coming, and darting forward brought the slung-shot down on Bunce's wrist.

The revolver dropped to the floor, and the rascal uttered a yell of pain.

As Chris stooped to pick the weapon up, Beagle sprang upon him.

Dick jumped at Beagle, yanked him away and flung him against the chimney.

Bunce picked up a stout piece of wood and raised it to strike Dick, who at the moment was not in a position to defend himself, for Beagle had grabbed both his arms.

Chris got hold of the revolver, cocked it and fired hastily at Bunce.

The rascal clapped his hand to his breast with a cry, like a wild animal in distress, and staggered back against the window through which he crashed, and fell out, carrying the sash and part of the woodwork with him.

Dick and Beagle, locked in a desperate embrace, staggered about in the vicinity of the chimney.

Finally they fell against it with considerable force.

A score or more of bricks were dislodged, leaving a gaping hole.

Beagle fell over them, struck his head against a beam and fell unconscious, dragging Dick down with him.

The young express agent disengaged himself from his awkward position and then stood up.

"Get one of those blankets yonder and we'll tear—why, where is Bunce?"

"Went t'rough dat winder wit' a bullet in his chest, and I reckon he's in de yard now," replied Chris, coolly.

"Great Scott! He must be dead after that fall," said Dick, rushing to the window and looking out.

Bunce lay in a heap below, inert and motionless.

"He's done for. So you shot him?"

"Had to or he'd have brained youse wit' dat stick dere. He had you dead to rights, only I happened to be Johnny on the spot."

"It's tough to kill a man, Chris," said Dick, shaking his head.

"It would have been tougher if he'd killed youse. Wot good is he, anyway? He might jest as well be a stiff as up in Sing Sing for fifteen or twenty year."

"Well, let's secure Beagle while the chance is ours."

They tore a blanket into strips and tied the rascal so that he couldn't by any possibility free himself.

"We'll leave him here till we send the police for both of them," said Dick.

At that moment his eyes rested on the hole in the chimney where he saw something bright.

Looking into the place he saw a tin box, which he pulled out.

The key was in the lock.

Dick turned it and opened the cover.

It appeared to be full of something covered with an old newspaper on top of which lay an envelope addressed thus:

"TO WHOEVER FINDS THIS BOX."

Dick put the box down, and opened the envelope which was not sealed.

The enclosure read as follows:

"I give and bequeath to whoever finds this box the contents thereof, and may its possession do him more good than it has done me. I have found nothing but rank ingratitude in this world from those to whom I looked for respect and kinship, so I thus take my revenge upon them all. What might have been theirs had they deserved it shall go to a stranger. Who that stranger may be I care not. I came into the world with nothing, and with nothing shall I depart from it. I am content.

(Signed)

"DAVID MUNYON.

"Witnesses:

"JOHN SEDLEY, No. 728 Walnut Street, P—

"MARTHA COLLINS, 728 Walnut Street, P—."

Then followed a notary public's attestation, signed and stamped with the seal of Lewis Allen, Notary Public, 128 Washington Street, P—.

Dick picked up the box, removed the newspaper and saw bunches of bank notes.

The sight staggered him.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Chris. "You're rich."

"But it isn't mine," replied Dick.

"Why ain't it? Doesn't de man who put it dere say dat whoever finds de box gets what's in it?"

Dick read the paper again and no longer doubted that great good luck had come to him most unexpectedly.

Taking the box under his arm he and Chris descended to the yard and found Bunce as dead as a coffin nail. The pistol shot had only grazed him.

The fall had broken his neck, and his finish had come at last.

It was after dark when Dick and Chris appeared at the police station and told the story of their encounter with the two crooks.

Both were put under arrest, and a wagon with several officers was dispatched to the deserted house.

It brought back Beagle and the corpse of Bunce.

In the meantime Dick had telegraphed Mrs. Lawrence that he and Chris were in trouble over the death of Bunce Oliver, and asked her to come on with Mr. Winthrop.

He also sent word to the station agent to come to the jail.

When the agent arrived he told him their story and asked him to look after the express company's business next day till he was released from custody.

The first train from New York in the morning brought Mrs. Lawrence, Nellie and Mr. Winthrop.

The latter bestirred himself, and put up cash bail for Dick.

At the examination both he and Chris were discharged.

Beagle consented to go to New York without papers, and was taken there by two Manhattan detectives sent on for the purpose.

He was subsequently tried for assisting in the abduction of Nellie, pleaded guilty, and was let off with seven years.

Dick in the meanwhile looked up the witnesses to the strange bequest of David Munyon, and found them, together with the notary public.

He placed the brief will in the hands of a lawyer to put through for him, and the contents of the box was taken charge of by the court.

In due time it was handed over to him, and he found himself worth \$40,000.

A year after he was promoted to a more responsible position in the employ of the express company, and eventually became a departmental superintendent.

Long before that he married Nellie, and set Chris the Cripple up in business.

And so we drop the curtain on the successful man who was once known as Rough and Ready Dick.

THE END.

Read "TIPPED OFF BY TELEGRAPH; OR, SHAKING UP THE WALL STREET BEARS," which will be the next number (191) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

In France, frogs are protected by law much as fish are in this country. There is a closed season, and hunting them by night is forbidden at any time.

The reason the raft spider is so called is because it builds a raft of dry leaves and other materials, fastened together with threads of silk, in order to pursue its prey in water.

The very hottest known locality is in the Great African Desert, where in summer the mercury often rises to 150 degrees F. Strange as it may seem, the nights following these days are often uncomfortably cool.

A bulky mahogany log, which had been sawed into boards, at Belfast, Ireland, was found to show, on every board, right through, a clearly defined "photograph" of a small deer and a larger animal, running. The "photograph" was probably transmitted by lightning during a storm.

The Siamese, above all nations in the world, hate to walk; no such mode of progression is tolerated by a Siamese if he or she can by any means ride. A Venetian gondolier will walk sometimes; even a Hollander will ride on his rough cart; but a Bangkok man—not if he can help it. His family boat for him.

At a woman's meeting in Andover, Mass., a middle-aged speaker was deploring the lack of physical exercise provided for her sex. She urged the immediate establishment of a gymnasium for women, and as she took her seat a mouse jumped off the stage and ran down the aisle. For about five minutes it looked as if the gymnasium was already organized, and was in successful operation, and that women were indulging in too much physical exercise. One table on the stage had to support six women, and it wasn't a very large table, either, while the shrieks of the terrified damsels could be heard half a mile away.

A giant pike, which is for English and Scotch streams the record catch, was caught recently on the Hampshire Stour by the orthodox method of rod and line. The fish when weighed turned the scales at 37 1/4 pounds. Its length is 45 inches and girth 24 inches. When first taken out of the water on Sunday morning it was weighed with a spring balance and reached the figure of over 40 pounds, but in the intervening time it has shrunk to its present size. The captor of this noble prize said: "I caught her on Lord Wimborne's estate. The stream was in

flood, and I was fishing with snap tackle in a very fast stream. I had an hour before caught and given away a 14-pound pike, which is probably the male fish. I dropped my bait into the run and it was carried by the swirl round the corner into a backwater which shelves gradually up toward the bank from the point of the island. The pike took me fairly quietly, for she was old and sluggish, and not for some time did I realize that I was fast to one of the biggest pike that has ever been caught in the British Isles. She fought me for nearly half an hour, and at last I managed to get her toward the shelving bank. My keeper, wild with excitement, plunged into the water, and we got her out somehow. She looked lovely on coming out of the water. The shading of her body was exquisite, and the pink spots, which have since grown blurred and faded showed up splendidly. My chief reason, however, for congratulation is that she must have been one of the worst thieves in our duck decoy. There is no close season for pike on the Stour, otherwise she might long have survived as the terror of the wild ducklings which we rear there every summer, and have missed in large quantities."

JOKES AND JESTS.

"Only fools are certain, Tommy; wise men hesitate." "Are you sure, uncle?" "Yes, my boy; certain of it."

"I'm coming to your office to-day, John." "All right," responded the man who rents in a modern sky-scraper. "Telegraph me when you leave the first floor; wife and I'll meet you at the 166th."

"My physician is a very inconsistent man," said the heat sufferer. "In what way?" "He advised me to keep perfectly quiet and avoid all excitement, and then invited me to go with him to the baseball game."

Bessie—Yes; he held me on his knee and I rested my head on his shoulder, and just as his mustache brushed my cheek he said— Jessie (expectantly)—Yes, he said— Bessie— Isn't it beastly weather for this time of year?

"I told one of her friends that she looked young for her age and she got angry." "Couldn't you fix it up?" "I tried to; I told another of her friends that she is not as old as she looks, and now she doesn't even speak to me."

Superintendent (to applicant for night watchman)—You're not afraid of a little manual operation at night, are you? Applicant—Phot's that agin, sor? Superintendent—I asked are you afraid of a little manual operation? Applicant—Oi ain't afraid iv anny mon livin', be he ayther little or big, sor!

"Yes," the lady remarked, "since John's uncle died we have a nice country house, horses, cows, pigs, hens, and——" "That must be charming," broke in the other. "You can have all the fresh eggs you want every day." "Oh, well," hastily interrupted the first speaker, "of course the hens can lay if they like to, but in our position it isn't at all necessary."

Three-year-old Roger had seen a mouse before, but never one in a trap. Going into the kitchen the other morning, he discovered a strange-looking contrivance on the floor, with a tiny mouse caught fast in it. For a minute he looked at the thing in puzzled silence. Then he observed thoughtfully: "Well, I didn't know there was a mouse in our house with a red thing like that on him!"

THE MANIAC'S MISTAKE

By D. W. Stevens.

AN EXPLANATION BY THE AUTHOR.

I will premise by stating that I, a few weeks ago, received the notification of the death of an uncle, as one of whose heirs-at-law my presence was desired at the opening and reading of his will.

This uncle was an old bachelor, reputed wealthy, an M. D., noted for years for his exceptional talent in treating cases of insanity. In fact, he became so well known on this account that for many years prior to his death, he had been at the head of the faculty of ——— Insane Asylum.

Well, I attended the reading of his will, found myself the devisee of a comfortable sum, and, in addition, was presented with his library, in which he had outlined many of the most peculiar cases of insanity which had come under his observation.

And from these manuscripts I intend to draw a few cases, leaving everything described as nearly as possible in the language of my uncle, save the cutting out of occasional technical medical terms, which are difficult to understand and of no particular value.

* * * * *

Never will I forget my first encounter with a maniac. At college, I had stood at the head of the class in neurology, or nervous diseases, of which insanity is one.

In fact, I had received a medal for a supposed excellent description or diagnosis of the stages passed through by a sane mind in verging toward insanity. I always imagined I should be cool and collected in the presence of a human being so afflicted, but ah! how sadly I was mistaken, as you shall see.

I graduated in June, and having worked hard up to the very day of graduation, I determined to pass the summer in the country. So after a few days spent with my father and mother, I packed my trunk and went to Tarrytown on the Hudson.

I was walking on "the hill," the prettiest section of the village, in the cool of the evening, when I noticed two men approaching me.

One was young, not more than twenty-one or two, with a handsome face, and hair clustering about his head in ringlets. He was elegantly dressed, evidently belonging to a family of wealth. The other was an older man, more plainly dressed, and seemed to have charge of the younger.

As we drew nearer, I divined the reason, for I caught a glimpse of the restless eyes and settled melancholy on the young man's face. He was not in his right mind. Harmless now, and generally, I guessed, but subject to occasional violent fits which necessitated a man to keep watch over him.

We were within several feet of each other before the young man appeared to notice me.

Then I saw him start, saw his face change its color for a livid hue, and between his tightly-closed teeth he sucked in a long breath with a peculiar hissing, disagreeable sound.

"Quiet, Charlie, quiet!" said his keeper, soothingly, and then glancing at me I saw that he gave a start of surprise.

Again drawing another of those long, suppressed breaths, I saw his hands slowly rise, saw his fingers begin to twitch convulsively, to writhe and squirm with that strange, snaky motion so common among demented persons.

What could it mean? How had I roused his anger?

"Sh! Charlie, control yourself," again said his keeper, and

unseen by his charge, motioned me energetically to hurry along out of sight.

Thinking it best to comply, I passed by. A suffocated cry of anger caused me to turn and look back, and I saw Charlie, only prevented by the keeper's embrace, from springing upon me.

Never shall I forget the look of fiendish rage, of malevolence, stamped on that face, handsome in repose, but now horrible in its distortion.

Somewhat alarmed, as I will frankly confess, I lost no time in getting out of sight, and just at dusk returned to my boarding place, a large house almost meeting the name of hotel.

I had not been in my room more than a quarter of an hour when I was informed that a person was below who wished to see me. On his being shown up I recognized the maniac's keeper.

"Sir!" he said, and his voice actually trembled as he spoke, "your resemblance to another man nearly cost you your life."

"How so?"

"You resemble in a marked degree the man who blighted Charles Leroy's life, and unsettled his reason. He was deceived by the resemblance, and but for my timely intervention and your leaving at the right juncture, he would have torn you limb from limb."

"What is the history of the case?" I inquired, not without curiosity.

"Charles Leroy loved a woman, fair as an angel, but false as hades. She encouraged him to believe she loved him in return, but she was only playing with him. Of a sanguine, passionate, hopeful nature, Leroy was translated to a heavenly existence, and when told that this woman encouraged other men, would not believe it; she told him that it was untrue, and that was enough. Like a thunderbolt falling from a clear sky the truth at last became known to him. He went to her house at once, and she mocked his love, laughed at his impassioned entreaties, and dismissed him, with the cruel words: 'Go, sir, or I will call my intended husband, and have you put out.' You see he had importuned her until she was beginning, perhaps, to become aware of her perfidy.

"Leroy then understood her character for the first time. He arose and rushed away in a towering passion. He remained housed closely after that, a settled melancholy descending on him.

"They tried to rouse him, but in vain. He began to act strangely, but they little imagined that he was actually mad until the day the fair but false one was married. In the middle of the marriage service, Leroy rushed into the church, and upbraiding the woman, fired again and again upon the man who had—as he believed—won her from him, but who had in reality been engaged to her before she met Leroy.

"The man fortunately escaped with his life, so wildly the shots were fired.

"Leroy was taken home, and I was engaged as companion and keeper for him. He afterwards quieted down and is generally tractable, unless he hears either of their names spoken, when he gets in a violent fit. Consequently we are careful that they shall never be alluded to in his presence.

"This couple lately returned to Tarrytown to spend the summer, and I am satisfied that he had some knowledge of it, though he cunningly hides it from me.

"Now, sir, I would warn you to be careful. He never goes out save at the hour you met us, and by avoiding the hill at that time, an unpleasant scene may be avoided."

"Poor fellow!" I could not help saying. "And can nothing be done for him?"

"Nothing. Money has been spent without stint, the best physicians employed, but his malady remains incurable. But I must go. You, sir, will be careful to avoid a meeting, for his sake, for your own?"

"I will," I answered, and bade the man good-night.

As I was rambling around the next day, my steps led me to the monument erected on the spot where Andre was captured by the patriots while on his way to New York after the meeting with that traitor to his country, Benedict Arnold.

I saw several ladies there, and was surprised by hearing one of them call me by name. A quick glance at her and then I exclaimed:

"Ah! I am delighted at this rencontre, Miss —. But hold, I believe you are married, and I should consequently say Mrs. —," and I paused.

"Brooks," she said, laughingly.

In former years we had known each other intimately, but had drifted apart, as I plunged into study and gave up society, and for three years past I had not seen her.

"You must come and see me," she said, after having introduced her companion. "Make one of our present party and return to tea. My husband is in the city, but will be home on a late train, and I would very much like you to meet."

"Why?" I inquired.

"I think you'll recognize each other," she replied with a light laugh. Her words puzzled me at the moment, but I soon forgot them, for the present, at least.

I accepted the invitation and went to her house to tea.

Having shown me into a room where I could enjoy a cigar, my hostess excused herself while she went to dress for the evening.

I took a chair, and fell into a reverie presently, interrupted finally by the sound of stealthy steps. I was in the act of turning when the person made a catlike spring.

Then came a shrill, elfish cry, and the maniac—for he it was behind me—flung a strong cloth over my head, and exerting his strength, pulled it tight and hard over my face, strangling my cries and suffocating me.

He had taken me at a disadvantage, and I could not budge from the armchair. I flung up my hands and tried to tear away the cloth, but it was useless.

I struggled—oh, how hard—when I felt my brain reeling, when I felt the excruciating pains of suffocation dart through my chest. But—the pall of insensibility—*perhaps of death*—sealed over my brain in spite of all I could do, and the world drifted from my grasp.

What happened then I don't know, but I recovered consciousness presently to find myself lying on the floor, my hands and feet bound tightly together, while the house was filled with yells and cries of fright, terror, dismay and fiendish exultation.

A moment later I saw Mrs. Brooks dragged into the room by Charles Leroy, on whose face rested the expression I had seen there the evening before.

"Ha-ha! Come on—come on, you false-hearted she-devil! Come and see the blood run! Ha-ha! You murdered my love, now I shall slay yours!"

"Mercy—mercy! Help—help!"

"Hush up! Why do you cry for help? None dare come!"

Shrinking, screaming, the lady was dragged near me. All at once it flashed upon me. She was the fair woman who had driven him crazy, and it was her husband the maniac mistook me for. That explained her words: "I think you will recognize each other!"

"Prepare for death!" hissed the maniac, turning his lurid, venomous eyes on me. "Ha! Fiend, you robbed me of her, but you shall die for it. See—see! This knife shall drink your blood, and I have brought her that she might see it flow. Revenge—revenge!"

With an appalling shriek he forced her into a chair so placed that she must see what passed, and then brandishing the knife, he faced me. Cruel as the tiger who sports with his victim, the maniac stooped a little, and waving the hand

clutching the knife slowly before my vision, he crept toward me like a beast of prey.

God only knows what I suffered during the next minute. It was a relief even when he bounded at me with a demoniac yell, with the knife raised to strike.

I saw the flashing blade descend.

Then I uttered a cry of pain.

He had aimed at my heart, but missing it, the blade entered my shoulder.

He now flung himself upon me, gnashing his teeth, and once again raised the blood-stained blade.

I closed my eyes, and—

It was perfectly terrible to hear the savage yells and curses which followed.

His keeper had at that moment rushed in and arrested the murderous hand of the maniac in time to save my life. In a second other assistance came; Leroy was overpowered, and I released.

I rose to my feet, bathed in perspiration, just as Mr. Brooks entered the room.

He was near enough like me to have been my brother, and I no longer wondered at the Maniac's Mistake.

Poor fellow! He died in an asylum shortly after.

That Mrs. Brooks does regret, and will regret to her dying day, the coquetry which crazed Leroy, I am sure.

But—I never desire to see her again. It would too vividly recall that morning when, lying on the floor, I saw the fatal blow about to be struck, and I a victim of a MANIAC'S MISTAKE.

The latest development in international trade is a commerce in insects in which the parties concerned are none other than the great and progressive nations themselves. It is growing to be an ordinary thing for the Khedive of Egypt to tackle the President of Chili for a swap of a bottle of flies for a box of ticks, or for Uncle Sam to trade a nest of yellowjackets to France for an insect that is the hereditary enemy of the gipsy moth. It is good business; upon the fact that "little fleas have other fleas to bite 'em," may be built a plan of defense against the insect hordes that from time to time invade communities and do great damage; for these instinctive enemies may be introduced to give them battle. The manner of marshaling the insect armies is a thing that is found out by the bureaus of entomology of the various nations, and these are co-operating and have built up a considerable interchange in insects that have been enlisted in the fight for man's good. The whole thing started in California, where the people were so progressive as to sell desert land sight unseen for five hundred dollars an acre, and the purchasers so ingenious as to make it worth one thousand dollars by planting orange trees on it. When the scale attacked these orange trees, the orchard men found a beetle to eat it, and sicked them on and so saved the day. The scale was nothing less than an accumulation of insects, and the peculiar beetle that attacked it is none other than the ladybug of the nursery rhyme that is admonished to "fly away home." It should be remembered, however, that she may not properly be called a "bug"; for that is an ugly word, to say nothing of its shortness, very loosely used by unscientific Americans, and on the other side applied merely to the inhabitants of boarding-house beds. To speak by the book, she is a "ladybird," though on the face of it that classification may appear as loose as that of Mother Goose. Italy, Spain, the British West Indies, and other communities where oranges are grown, are calling upon Uncle Sam for great quantities of ladybirds to devour the scale in those sections. This country is responding freely, and the insect is going forth to get busy with its healthy appetite and do its part toward saving the orange crop in many parts of the world.

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